Library Edition/Other India Press Original
Not to be sold or taken away

Gandhi

His Gift of the Fight

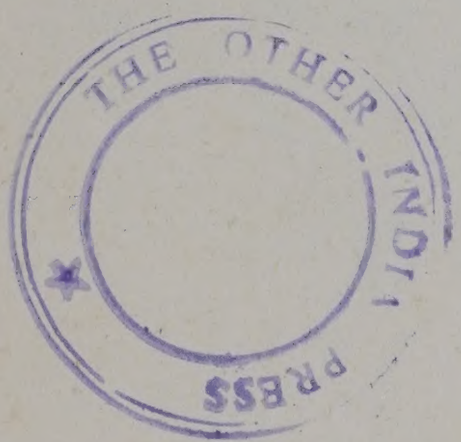
Jehangir P. Patel
Marjorie Sykes

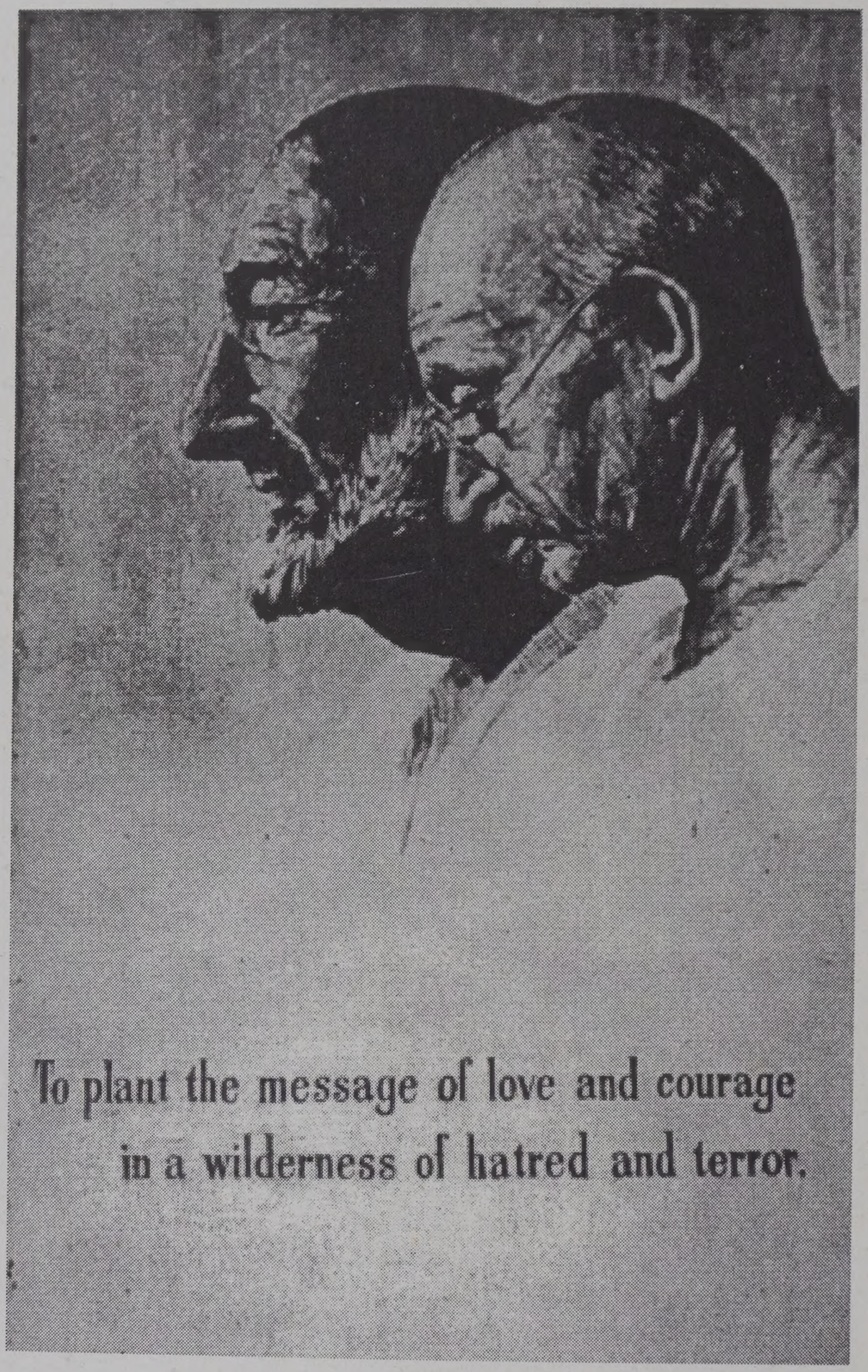
With a Preface by
Hallam Tennyson

The Other India Press

Gandhi

His Gift of the Fight





To plant the message of love and courage
in a wilderness of hatred and terror.

Gandhi

His Gift of the Fight

Jehangir P. Patel
Marjorie Sykes

The Other India Press

Gandhi:
His Gift of the Fight

© Jehangir P. Patel
Marjorie Sykes

First Edition: 1987
Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia, Hoshangabad, M.P. 461 001
Second Edition: 1996
The Other India Press

Published by:
The Other India Press
Mapusa 403 507
Goa.

Distributed by:
The Other India Bookstore
Above Mapusa Clinic,
Mapusa 403 507
Goa.

ISBN No.: 81-85569-27-4

Printed by:
S.J. Patwardhan
Mudra
383 Narayan Peth,
Pune 411 030.

"One great man who remains human
can for ever and for all men
rescue our faith in humanity".

— Stefan Zweig

A Note on the Second Edition

Towards the end of her life, Marjorie wrote to us suggesting that she would like us to bring out a reprint of *Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight*, a book she had jointly authored with her close friend Jehangir Patel. It was the measure of loving trust she placed in us. Having known Marjorie for some years, we knew her request came out of her conviction that the book would help young people all over the English-speaking world to understand and appreciate the person of Gandhi. For us the request was at the same time a command. Marjorie had the authority to issue a command in the form of a gentle request!

Both of us had been moved by the book, as well as had enjoyed Marjorie's writing. Although it guides you through the recent eventful history of pre-Independence India and Gandhi's signal and central role in it, the book is a story of the encounter of two individuals with Gandhi over a long stretch in the prime of their lives. Marjorie and Jehangir lived, during this whole period, a richly textured life of their own, one in the field of teaching, the other in business; they were never "camp-followers" of Gandhi. And yet he charmed them into his circle of trusted associates who were glad to be assigned a task. Both of them found that, even though he was the supreme leader with an enviable mass following, one was encouraged to keep one's independence of thought and spirit and

have an intimate relationship with him in freedom and equality. The book drew a portrait of Gandhi which highlighted the heroic qualities in him ("the gift of the fight") while, at the same time, bringing out many endearing traits of his personality as a normal human (and humane) being.

Hence, we too were independently keen that the book should remain in print. We responded positively to Marjorie's suggestion, and were exploring ways of raising finances to enable us to reprint the book when, for reasons that need not be gone into here, the matter was taken out of our hands. It remains a matter of deep regret that the book was not brought out while Marjorie was amidst us.

Luckily, soon after Marjorie's death in 1995 Shri N. Ramamurthy, her close friend, associate and executor-trustee of her Estate, picked up the thread once again. We were only too happy to respond positively to his query. Shri Ramamurthy underwrote the publication by ensuring critical financial backing which has enabled us to bring out the book. Many thanks to him.

Thanks are also due to our friend Shri Claude Alvares who readily agreed to bring out the book under the Other India Press imprint. It is most fitting that the book carry the imprint of a publishing house dedicated to the remaking of society along alternative paths.

Marjorie had closely re-read the book — very characteristic of her! — and made extensive revisions. This makes it a revised edition.

Shri Partap Aggarwal was for some years in the nineteen eighties the coordinator of Friends Rural Centre at Rasulia (Hoshangabad, M.P.), an century old Quacker Centre, where Marjorie stayed till she left for England. We are happy to include a

short, moving personal memoir of Marjorie written specially by Partapbhai for this edition. We also append a brief life-sketch of Marjorie at the end of the book.

Sadly, Marjorie is no longer with us. It would have made her most happy to see the second edition published. However Shri Jehangir Patel though not in the best of health has been most enthusiastic about the reprinting and will be happy to see the new edition in print.

Vasant Palshikar
Sujit Patwardhan

My Sister Marjorie

I met Marjorie Sykes for the first time in 1953 at Rasulia (Central India). She was tall, straight, handsome; but it was the way she walked that made the most lasting impression on my mind. Her stride was so long and brisk that to walk with others she had to restrain herself.

After this first meeting I crossed her path many times in the following years — in Sarvodaya or Quaker meetings, at homes of common friends, and for minor business a couple of times. Occasionally I would notice her name in print and feel inclined to read her word. But her stiff British exterior was the wall I did not cross to become a close friend.

Many years later, in 1979, I went again to work at Rasulia. This time I wanted to carry out experiments in natural farming of which till then I had mostly dreamed. The Friends Rural Centre governing body boldly gave me its consent to do what I wanted. I was not surprised because I knew Rasulia had a legacy of inviting mavericks. As I recall now, I went to Rasulia in the 50's to popularise making and using organic compost: 25 years later I went to take that idea a few steps further.

Marjorie was then in England. She wrote to me hinting of her plans to return. I responded by inviting her to Rasulia. She wrote back saying something like the following: "My plan is to serially live and work at several known places. I would shift to where I feel I could be most helpful. I am not settling in any one institution. But thank you for inviting me to Rasulia. I shall come there first and then we will see. No promises at this point."

Marjorie came. I went to meet her at the train station. Noticing a touch of grey above my ear, she put her hand on my head and said, "sign of wisdom already?" We both burst out laughing and hugged each other. For the first time since knowing her in 1953 I felt the real Marjorie behind the straight exterior.

With that auspicious beginning our relationship grew stronger every day. Marjorie soon made her decision to stay at Rasulia. My wife, I, our three children, *and* Marjorie, became one family — part of course of the larger Rasulia community which also was trying to become a real family.

I have the habit of rising early in the morning. Almost as regularly as the sun rises, I would go out for a walk in the Rasulia fields and also visit the cows and my favourite bull Bali, who returned my attention with 10 times as much love. He would lick my arms and face, and would not let me go until he had his fill of my petting.

Marjorie too, was an early bird. On my return from morning walk I knew she also would already be at her desk writing. A pot of hot tea or coffee would be sitting by her side. It became my regular daily practice to stop, visit with Marjorie, and share a cup of whatever she had made — "a cup o", as she used to say. Slowly these visits evolved into a time for sharing deeper leadings each of us had felt. To me, and I am sure to Marjorie as well, these brief visits became extremely valuable.

About the middle of our 8 years together, one day, we were chatting in the early morning as usual. Both of us were in cheerful mood. Marjorie reminisced about her days in Madras when she first came out from England; about 1927. I asked her if she still remembered Tamil. "Yes," she said "I can function quite normally among Tamil speakers even now." Impulsively, I asked, "Marjorie, what is the Tamil word for elder sister." "Akka" she responded. "Akka" I repeated after her. We then looked into each other's eyes and knew that this was no longer a word for us. It defined our relationship — she *was* my *akka* and I her little brother. My heart thumped. I knew something momentous had happened.

Kin terms connote extensive details of expected behaviour — difficult even to describe in a book. Centuries of individual and social experience is condensed into them, and they still continue to change and grow. Marjorie and I understood the meaning of *akka* differently, but there was enough common ground to start building a relationship on.

I looked upon her as the oldest in the family with more experience of living, wiser, and a symbol of family unity. Tradition in which I grew up old sister is mother surrogate. She fitted the role well. For she *was* wiser, and so tough that she could keep everyone, including me, in check.

She gave me all her love and watched over me like a mother bird watches her chicks. In times of crisis she spread her wings over me and bore the fire upon herself. She was always available when the burden of work was heavy. My children too appreciated and enjoyed Marjorie *akka*.

On the other hand she well understood and respected my position as the oldest male and active head of the family. It is required in the rules of Hindu joint family that *everyone*, including the *akka*, consult the head on all important matters and obey when he issues

a command. Knowing that this rule would be very difficult for Marjorie to follow, I had to be very cautious in coming to conclusions.

All her life Marjorie had chosen and followed her paths all by herself. She had made major decisions more or less alone and stuck to them without flinching. she learned to do her work alone to the extent that she found it difficult to use help even when she needed it. To consult and obey someone in real life perhaps never entered even her dreams. But for love she began doing even this.

One day she put before me a letter inviting her to talk at a Sarvodaya conference some considerable distance away. After I had read the letter she asked, "What do you think? Should I or should I not go?" I thought for a long moment considering the state of her health, the arduous train journey alone, and her right to be excused at 80+. "In my opinion you should not go, Marjorie," I answered.

She took the letter from me and right then and there wrote a regret letter. I felt gratified but also amazed at what Marjorie had perhaps done for the first time in her entire life. After that Marjorie regularly consulted me on family and personal matters, and, took my advise. It was I who had with difficulty to learn to offer opinions sparingly and with great caution.

On one occasion Marjorie asked me to take her on an all-night excursion to the Narmada river. We had no motor vehicle then at Rasulia. I hired a bullock cart and we set off to enjoy a full-moon night on the river bank. She was happy as a child to her first picnic. We all went to sleep on the sand. I woke up in the middle of the night and found Marjorie sitting up and suffering painful cramps. I massaged her legs and she lapsed into sleep again. Next morning I scolded her for not waking me up.

By no means do I claim that Marjorie did what I told her to do: that is not required in the *akka*-litte brother relationship. But we both cherished our bond of love. Twice each year she treated me on the brother's day festival. Then circumstances wrenched us apart and we each obeyed mother Life. On *Rakhi* day each year and on many other times I still miss my *akka* who I had sincerely wished would spend the rest of her life with my family.

I thank God for our fellowship and the few years we spent together.

Partap

Preface

The enduring fascination of Gandhiji lies in his multiplicity: there are as many "Mahatma Gandhis" as there are people who met him — for each of us saw something different. This is why the testimony of Marjorie and Jehangir is of such unique interest and importance. Here are two people from very different backgrounds writing about the Gandhiji they had known separately and in varying circumstances over a period of thirty years. The portrait that emerges is fresh, incisive, detailed — yet even in these pages the sense of mystery remains powerful and unsolved.

Gandhiji was not born with any exceptional equipment. He was plain and shy; his intelligence was not outstanding; nor was he greatly gifted either as a writer or an orator; moreover he was not always free from a love of power. But he had one great asset — integrity (he called it "the search for truth") — and with this he remoulded his personality over a long life. This made Gandhiji something much more appealing than a "saint": it made him a very great — and a very human — being. Could we have loved him so much if we had not sensed his transcended weaknesses? "With integrity" we were able to say to ourselves, "I too could achieve something of what Gandhiji has achieved". Beauty and brains, after all, are part of one's genetic inheritance. Integrity is within the reach of all.

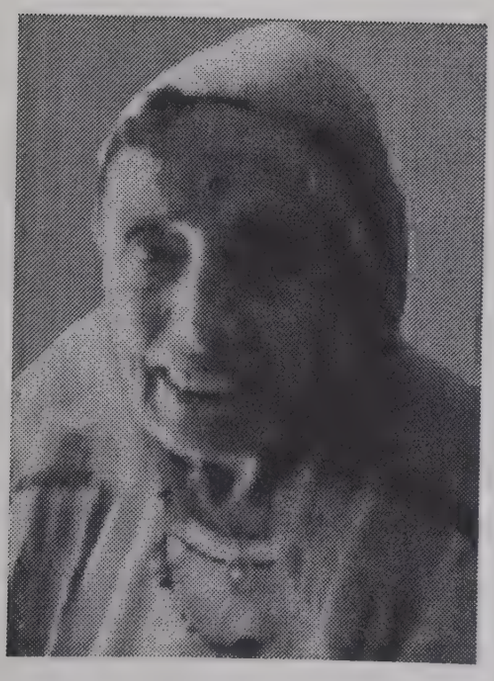
Marjorie and Jehangir make abundantly clear this intensely personal nature of Gandhiji's effect on others. And, by implication, they seem to me to pinpoint the reason for the disappointingly meagre nature of the influence his ideas have exerted since his death. He, more than most, exercised a charismatic spell on those who met him. Under this spell, people became capable of dedication far above their normal capacity. But once this charismatic personal influence was withdrawn, we sank back into our old habits and routines.

Marjorie is a Quaker and she would agree, I expect, that Quakers have been working on more or less Gandhian lines for several centuries; yet, apart from a general humanising influence, the Quaker impact has been very slight. If one is realistic, then one has to admit that under ordinary circumstances our power to change ourselves — let alone others — is pretty limited. We should not therefore expect Gandhiji's life to have more than a sporadic and intermittent effect on human thought and action. His influence will not be specific or immediately obvious but it will perhaps continue to accumulate quietly and diffuse itself in unexpected times and places. We have become quickly disillusioned because we mistakenly expected quick results. It is certainly we ourselves about whom we ought to be disillusioned — not Gandhiji!

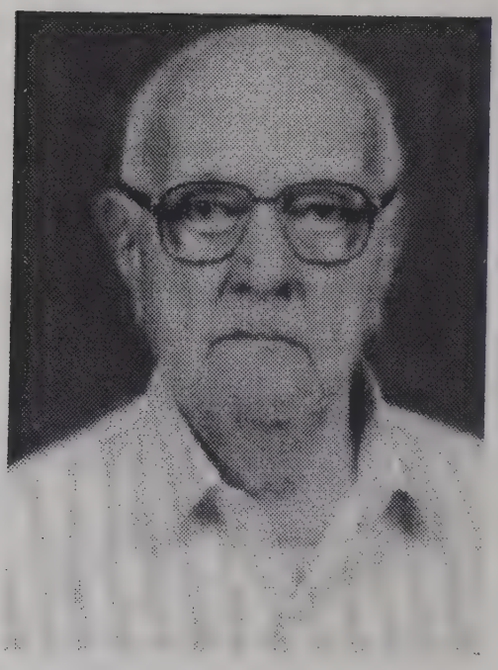
Christ expected impossible moral standards from his followers. So did Gandhiji. He preached such axioms as 'birth control through self control', and he admonished us to live and work in conditions not far removed from poverty and starvation so that we could re-vitalise the village communities of India. How distant such ideals seem to us today. Yet our hearts and minds still respond to Gandhiji's message; and since he struggled with such intensity — and saving humour! — to live out the precepts which he preached to others, he will always remain among the prophets and heroes of mankind.

Will any other prophet or hero ever be so well documented? It seems unlikely. And here in this book Marjorie and Jehangir make him real to us once again. How truly amazing that reality is: an ordinary mortal who lived and moved among us within living memory — but in this quite extraordinary way. Reading about it — we gird ourselves once more for the fight.

London, December1986 **Hallam Tennyson**



Marjorie Sykes



Jehangir Patel

Authors's Note

This book is a joint undertaking on the part of two very dis similar people whose differences of background and temperament have served to enrich their friendship. The friendship itself began in Mahatma Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram, with the discovery that each of us had been drawn, by different paths, into the circle of his fellow-workers. The book is the fruit of this friendship, and is essentially a record of Gandhi's impact on our own lives. One of us, Marjorie, has found that the stimulus of Gandhi's personality, life and thought was inextricably intertwined for her with that of Rabindranath Tagore, and we have included some account of this also. We have not attempted a "life" of Gandhi, though we have tried to explain enough of the background to help readers unfamiliar with the history of Indian Independence to follow the story better.

There are a number of people for whose help we wish to record our appreciation. Special thanks are due to Jehangir's wife Sophie Patel for her steady support throughout and for many helpful suggestions. Arun Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson, not only gave us warm encouragement but also proposed changes in presentation and emphasis which we whole-heartedly endorsed and adopted. The late Dr. Amiya Chakravarty readily gave us permission to quote

some of his own perceptive comments on incidents in which he and Marjorie had been closely associated. Horace G. Alexander, Gandhi's trusted friend, and author of the excellent study *Gandhi through Western Eyes*, has been a pillar of strength both directly and indirectly. Our own dear Bombay friends Sally Singh and N. Ramamurthy have continually spurred us on by their own belief in the value of the project. The librarians of the Gandhi Memorial Museum at Mani Bhavan, Bombay, and of the Viswabharati Central Library, Santiniketan showed much patient kindness in helping to check references for material used in the book. The final typing was the work of a number of generous, kindly volunteers. Last but not least, Hallam Tennyson, a valued friend ever since he and Marjorie met in Bengal in the forties, has contributed his thought-provoking Preface.

This book then is not ours alone. Whatever merits it may have, belong to all those who have helped us to make it because of their own love and respect for Gandhi. To all of them our very grateful thanks.

The quotation from Stefan Zweig which we have used in place of a "dedication" refers to Romain Rolland. It applies with equal force to Gandhi, whom Rolland greatly respected.

January 1987

Jehangir P. Patel
Marjorie Sykes

Contents

	Frontispiece*	**ii**
	A Note on the Second Edition	**vii**
	My Sister Marjorie	**xi**
	Preface	**xvii**
	Authors' Note	**xxi**
	Introduction: Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight	**1**
I	Gandhi and Tagore: The Candid Friends	**9**
II	Years of Apprenticeship: 1927-38	**29**
III	Gandhi and Tagore: The Double Sadhana	**50**
IV	Dark Days: 1939-42	**68**
V	Quit India: 1942-44	**85**
VI	Release and Renewal: 1944	**96**
VII	Poorna Swaraj	**113**
VIII	Sevagram: University of Service	**130**
IX	Divide and Quit: 1945-47	**142**
X	Independence and After: August 1947	**155**
XI	A House on Fire: Delhi 1947-48	**164**
XII	Peace with Pakistan: 1947-48	**178**
	Epilogue: Gandhi's Legacy: The Gift of the Fight	**189**
	References and Sources	**207**
	Marjorie Sykes, 1905–1995	**211**

* The Frontispiece is a rare picture of Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi'.
On page 149 is Gandhi's handwritten preface to *Charles Freer Andrews* by Chaturvedi and Sykes.

Introduction
Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight

The thirtieth of January, 1948.
An assassin's bullet was fired in Delhi.

The news flashed over the wires. The clamour of the markets was hushed. Stunned, speechless, numb, people fumblingly put up their shutters, abandoned their daily concerns, and went into their houses to fast and to mourn. A shroud of darkness, a heavy silence, covered the whole land. Bapu, father of the people, lay dead.

One of the writers of this book was in Bangalore that evening. She still remembers gratefully the wordless kindness with which her British host and hostess surrounded her. She remembers too how the diverse communities of that cosmopolitan city were fused into one by the tremendous spontaneous upsurge of their grief. Barriers were down, differences forgotten, we were simply men and women united by a common bereavement.

The other writer of this book was in Karachi, where he and a friend, on Gandhi's behalf, had been making arrangements for Gandhi to pay a visit to Pakistan. That mission of goodwill was to have taken place about ten days later. As the news reports came in, Karachi like Bangalore fell dark and silent; the few people who

walked its empty streets walked alone, their heads bowed. Divisions and differences were swallowed up, as in Bangalore, by the shock of an irreparable loss. Pakistani leaders and citizens, many weeping openly, sought out the Indian High Commissioner, Sri Prakasa, to share his grief and to express their own.

Our generation, for whom those days are a vivid memory, is nearing the end of its life's journey. Every year lessens the number of those who knew Mahatma Gandhi as a living leader and a trusted friend. For us, his life is not just a part of India's past history, too distant to be relevant today. We are among many ordinary men and women whose lives were given a new purpose and direction by their encounter with him. "We saw an illumined if difficult road and we had glimpses of a destination", as one of our contemporaries has written.[1] We believe that that "difficult road", Gandhi's road, is now the only road into a viable future, for India and humanity alike.

Many of the young people of the tragic eighties see no future ahead; they are sunk in apathy and despair. Instead of despair, Gandhi offers them hope; instead of apathy he offers action. He approaches the youth of today with what Rabindranath Tagore once called his "gift of the fight". The fight is a struggle against selfishness and pettiness, greed and fear, and all the cruelties they breed, both in ourselves and in society. Gandhi faced the same problems as we face today; like us he knew failure, and was tempted as we are to despair. But he did *not* despair. He knew bitter suffering, but he kept his hope, his steadfastness, and the warmth of his humanity.

In recent years Gandhi's warmth and steadfastness have been shown movingly in the film *Gandhi,* and have awakened a great human response throughout the world. The film concentrates, as it must, on some of the crucial events and dramatic crises in which Gandhi demonstrated how great the power of non-violence may

be, when guided by "the light of living Truth". Our own story is a more modest one; it touches only indirectly on Gandhi's public achievements. But we hope that it may be worth telling because greatness, like goodness, is revealed as surely in the "minute particulars" of daily living as in the critical turning-points of history.

Before embarking on the story itself, however, it may be useful to indicate how we ourselves were drawn to Gandhi. We are about the same age, but we come from different backgrounds and travelled by different paths. The story for each of us begins in 1914 when we were nine years old. Fifteen years later, in different parts of India, we were just beginning our "apprenticeship" in the struggle for Indian freedom; another fifteen years passed before, in 1944, we met and made friends in Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram.

In 1914, when the First World War broke out, Gandhi still believed that India's connection with Britain was beneficial. His sympathies were with Britain and her allies, as were those of the Indian public in general. The boy Jehangir, whose home was in Colaba near the Bombay naval docks, watched the Rajput cavalry on their way to embark for France. They were beautifully mounted; they wore magnificent turbans and carried shining spears, and as they rode they shouted: *British Sarkar ki Jai* (Victory to the British Raj). For the boy it was a thrilling sight. He remembered the Latin tag he had learned at school: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* (it is sweet and becoming to die for one's country). For him, as for the Rajputs, "country" and "raj" were one and the same. The scene was full of romantic glamour, and the Bombay boy could not know how different was the sordid reality of the battlefields where so many of those men, and their splendid innocent horses, were destined to suffer and die.

In the grimy little Yorkshire mining town where Marjorie spent her childhood, there was no romantic glamour; war was a disaster.

A beloved teacher was taken away from her school because she was German and so an "enemy alien". Her father, who had spent a happy year as a student in Dresden, looked at the photos of his German friends and wondered what the war meant for them. Then he too was taken away for military service. When "peace" came he returned safely, but saddened by the futility of the fighting and disgusted at the humiliations imposed on defeated Germany by the Versailles Treaty. "If they go on like this," he burst out one evening in the summer of 1919, "there'll be another war by the time my son is old enough to fight". The words came true; in the Second World War beautiful Dresden, his German "home", was deliberately obliterated.

In India, the years 1919-21 were of critical importance in the struggle for freedom, but neither of us, as adolescents, were aware of what was going on. Jehangir's family was Parsee in origin; his father directed a family business in cotton merchandise which had wide international connections. Like many Parsees, they had adopted a European way of life, and habitually used the English language. They exemplified, in fact, Macaulay's ideal of an educated Indian as, to all intents and purposes, a "brown Englishman".

Jehangir and his brothers were educated on the English pattern, at St. Xavier's School, Bombay. The school had high standards, but the history, literature and languages of India found no place in its curriculum. Marathi and Gujarati, the two major languages of Bombay, were regarded merely as a necessary tool for dealing with servants and shop-keepers. Jehangir was, therefore, effectively insulated from the currents of national aspiration which were sweeping through Bombay during his school days. In 1921, as a boy of sixteen, he was sent to England, where he lived in Cambridge, under the care of an Indian friend of his father, and prepared himself for the university by two years of private study. In 1923 he entered Downing College to read Natural Sciences.

In far-away Yorkshire, Marjorie's mother, worn out by the burdens of the war years, was seriously ill. During the spring and summer of 1919 Marjorie kept house for her father and the younger ones, cooked and scrubbed, washed and repaired clothes, worked in the garden, cared for her sick mother. She had no schooling for months, but she had a wonderful education!

One day, as she was working in her mother's room, her mother suddenly smiled at her. "You know", she said, "when you were born I was a bit disappointed that my first child wasn't a boy. Now, I'm *glad* that you're a girl!" Marjorie was silent, too moved to speak. She too had often secretly wished she were a boy; from that moment she was content with her womanhood.

After the war, her father had returned to his own work as a teacher and was appointed as headmaster of a school in another coal-mining village, where he spent the rest of his working life among the miners' children. The salary was a modest one; there was enough money for necessities but none for luxuries, and his own children soon learned that good fun could be had free. They tramped the lonely Yorkshire hills, learning to read a map and use a compass; they learned to enjoy books and music, and devised their own home-made entertainments. In later years Marjorie's students in India would sometimes ask her where she had been "trained" in Gandhi's principle of "learning through living"; she would answer, remembering those years: "In my own home, by my father and mother." But at the time India and Gandhi were far beyond her horizon.

Marjorie entered Newnham College, Cambridge in 1923, at the same time as Jehangir entered Downing. This was possible because scholarships were then generously available for students whose school work showed academic promise. She had to plan her expenses carefully, but the richest experiences of Cambridge life had little to do with money. By then her horizons had begun

to expand. As a schoolgirl in the little Yorkshire city of Wakefield she had been stirred by the Irish freedom struggle. In Cambridge, there were many students from India, men and women, who had known the non-cooperation movement of 1921, and who brought with them the new vision of *swaraj* — self-rule, independence — and made the name of Gandhi known. But academically and socially she and Jehangir moved in different circles and did not then meet.

Jehangir had quickly felt at home in Downing. English students attracted him by their lively humour and their capacity to laugh at themselves. Those from "the Indian empire" came from what are now five independent states: Bangladesh, Burma, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Several of them were prominent in sporting circles and became cricket or tennis "blues". Jehangir himself took up boxing, a sport whose discipline he came to regard, in later years, as a fine preparation for disciplined non-violence. He began to feel stirrings of pride in India when Cambridge Indians acquitted themselves creditably in the Davis Cup tennis tournaments, and when Duleep Singh became recognized as a great cricketer. "A great cricketer and an even greater gentleman", thought Jehangir, for whom Duleep became a life-long friend.

It came as a shock when a Cambridge sporting club, the "Hawks", imposed a colour bar and refused to admit Duleep into membership. Jehangir reacted angrily; he and his Indian and Burmese friends promptly organised a counter-club, the "Crocodiles", which imposed a colour bar in reverse and excluded all whites! But such racial exclusiveness was very exceptional. During the five happy years which Jehangir spent in England he was everywhere treated with kindness and courtesy. England for him was a second home, and it was there that he grew to maturity. When he returned to Bombay in 1926 to join the family business he was still in many ways a typical "brown Englishman".

Cambridge introduced Marjorie to thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life which were later to be illuminated by contact with Gandhi. At home there had been little formal religious observance, but a lively response to the beauty and mystery of living growing things. At school there had been encouragement to "think things out for yourself", and a first experience of the stately ritual of worship in Wakefield Cathedral, where ancient prayers and music spoke (as do the Quran and the Vedas) from a deeper level than words. In Cambridge both the experience of mystery and the ferment of thought were enriched. Christian thinkers commended the religion of Jesus as a *way of life*; a book by one of them, *Everyday Religion*,[2] spoke to Marjorie somewhat as Ruskin's *Unto this Last* had spoken to Gandhi in South Africa. Other Cambridge teachers, who declared with quiet passion that war between nations was a denial of all that Jesus stood for, clarified for her a Christian approach to non-violence. Religion, said these men and many others, *must* be concerned with "politics, economics and citizenship", and must speak to these "worldly" affairs from a deeper kind of reality. At another level Marjorie's religious horizons were also being expanded by friendships with fellow-students who came from outside the Christian tradition, some of whom talked of the problems being raised all over Asia by "Christian" arrogance or aloofness towards the indigenous cultures.

In vacations at home, Marjorie was becoming more and more fascinated by her father's educational ideas. He tried to make his school a place where children could *live* more fully, through happy work, experiment and discovery. He set them to make things, and so develop their skills of eye, hand and mind. He set them to read, not mechanically but for information and pleasure. He showed them that "history" and "geography" were full of people like themselves, whose music and poetry could speak to them and call out their human sympathy. Hours of patient labour, during evenings at home

---

* Literally, *work without desire,* work done for its own intrinsic value, with no extraneous motive.

were devoted to the preparation of his material; as Marjorie watched and helped, she found her own vocation and also learned to recognize the spiritual quality which India calls *nishkama karma*.*

So in 1926, when Jehangir returned to Bombay, Marjorie stayed on in Cambridge to work for her Teaching Diploma. At that time young Africans and Asians, the articulate leaders of many "colonial" peoples, were visiting the British universities to seek help with the education of their people at all levels. They foresaw the increasing impact of the outside world upon their indigenous ways of life, and wanted their cultures to be enriched and not destroyed by their contact with the west. They invited young English teachers to work with them to this end, in a partnership of equals. (As one of them** put it, the piano needs both its black keys and its white ones to evoke the full music!) Marjorie asked to be kept in touch with openings for teaching abroad; in 1928 she accepted an invitation to join the staff of the Bentinck Girls High School in the city of Madras.

** Dr. Aggrey, founder of Achimota College, Accra, Ghana.

Chapter I
Gandhi and Tagore: The Candid Friends

In 1927-28, when the authors of this book were just beginning their working lives in India, Gandhi's famous book *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* was published in English for the first time. Gandhi was then about 58 years old, and his earlier manhood, from his twenty-fourth to his forty-fifth year, had been spent in South Africa. His "experiments with Truth" had been life-long, but it was during those twenty years in South Africa that he had begun to relate them to the structure and life of society, and to such problems as racial discrimination and the oppression of the poor. As a leader of the Indian community there, he had set himself to awaken it to a sense of self-respect, an understanding of responsible freedom, and compassion for its own weaker members.

Even before Gandhi had gone to South Africa, a man older than himself by a few years had begun working in the same spirit in the villages of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore, poet and thinker, differed widely from Gandhi in background and temperament, but he worked for the same goals: the dignity of self-reliance and the exercise of responsible freedom. His faith in humanity was as strong and passionate as Gandhi's; the two men shared a great vision, that of a free, fearless, united and rejuvenated Indian people.

The relationships between Gandhi and Tagore were of great significance in the struggle for *swaraj* (self-rule) in India, and form part of the historical and psychological frame-work within which we ourselves were to "serve our apprenticeship" to the tasks of *swaraj* during the next ten years. It therefore seems appropriate to give some account of the development of their friendship, which formed the background to much of our own story.

When the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 Gandhi was still a schoolboy. Tagore, more than eight years older, was a sensitive young man, already becoming known as a poet. He was spending much of his time on the family estate at Shileidah in East Bengal, where he gained that insight into the lives of Bengali villagers which inspired so many of his moving short stories. It also inspired him with a vision of what *swaraj* in village terms might mean, and a determination to do all he could to promote it among the people who lived on and around his own estate. With the help of a few young volunteers he tried to show the villagers how health, education, justice and so on might be secured by their own efforts, their own co-operative labour. His experience made him critical of the procedures of the National Congress, which in those days attempted to secure reforms by petitioning the ruling power. He had come to believe (as he was to write many years later to Gandhi[1]) that "the great gift of freedom can never come by charity; we must win it before we can own it". He saw that if villages were to win their freedom, they must recover their lost power of initiative. "When I look at them," he declared in his Presidential Address to the Patna Conference in 1903, "talk of *swaraj,* of independence, appears to me a mockery. I want every Indian village to learn what *swaraj* really means... the times demand patient, sustained, unostentatious constructive work, and the breaking down of caste and sectarian walls."

Tagore saw also that one factor in this general apathy and impoverishment of spirit was bondage to a foreign language. At a

time when educated Bengalis used English for all public occasions he insisted on using Bengali when addressing fellow-Bengalis, even at the Convocation of the Calcutta University, where he challenged his student audience to question prevailing ideas. "In no other country in the world today," he declared, "is there this unnatural divorce between the language the students speak and that in which they are taught. Like nature's parasites, which depend for their survival on other forms of life and so never develop and use their own limbs, we in India depend for our intellectual nourishment on what comes to us through a foreign language. Our own powers are atrophied, and in our poverty of spirit we develop a morbid attachment to an alien culture. One of the chief ways to achieve that independence of spirit without which swaraj must remain an empty dream is to use one's native language, from earliest childhood onwards, as the vehicle of all learning."

Tagore presented his programme of constructive work in his book *Swadeshi Samaj*,* published in 1905 at the height of the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal. He felt however that his message had gone unheeded, that the upsurge of emotion generated by Lord Curzon's partition of the Province of Bengal had made people incapable of listening to reason. "Emotion is like fire," he wrote. "It consumes, it does not create" — not unless it is harnessed by reason, with patience and skill, in the service of a larger vision.

Tagore's own larger vision was embodied in some of the magnificent national songs which he wrote at that time and during the following years:

> Oh heart of mine awake, in this holy place of pilgrimage,
> In this land of India, on the shore of vast humanity.
>
> Aryan and Adivasi, Dravidian and Mongol,
> Scythian, Hun, Pathan and Mogul,

---

* The word *Samaj* means "society". The adjective *Swadeshi* means literally "of one's own country" and denotes reliance for one's essential needs upon the products and resources of one's own immediate environment.

All have merged in the one body.
Now the West has opened her doors and is bringing her offerings.
They will give and take, unite and be united,
In this land of India, on the shore of vast humanity.

Come Hindu, come Musalman, Parsee and Christian, one and all:
Clasp the hands of all, O Brahmins, and so be your hearts made holy.
Come ye who are shamed and dishonoured, fill the sacred bowl
With water that is sanctified by the touch of all
In this land of India, on the shore of vast humanity.[2]

This larger vision had to be striven for amid all the complexities of human motivation and immediate circumstance. The novels which Tagore was writing during these years, notably *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*), reflect his sense of the human conflicts and tragedies of the struggle.

From 1901 onwards, Tagore had been devoting a large part of his time to building up his own school at Santiniketan in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. He wanted it to be a kind of modern *Gurukul*,* which would provide the free and fearless education, rooted in Indian tradition, which a free India would need. During its first ten years the school struggled against much misunderstanding and hostility, but also attracted some wonderful, devoted young teachers who shared the poet's aims. Then in May 1912 Rabindranath visited London, where some of his own English translations of his poetry were introduced to English literary circles by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats. One of those present at this memorable meeting was C.F. Andrews, who had been for eight years a teacher at St. Stephens College, Delhi. Andrews' experience in Delhi had given him a deep sympathy with Indian national aspirations; he had met many national leaders, and had read with warm appreciation some of Tagore's articles on national themes published in English language magazines. Now, when he met Tagore face to face, he was captivated by his poetry and his personality.

---

* A *Gurukul* was a community of teachers and students in which the students lived with their guru (teacher) as his family, sharing household duties as well as study.

He soon became a devoted friend, and within a year he had made Santiniketan his new Indian home.

Meanwhile Gandhi's struggle for justice for the Indian community in South Africa had reached a critical stage. Gandhi was strongly supported in India by the great liberal statesman Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Gokhale eagerly welcomed Andrews' offer to go to South Africa and do what he could to help. With Tagore's blessing Andrews left Santiniketan for South Africa late in 1913, and Gandhi met him when his ship docked at Durban. During the weeks that followed the two men became close friends. It was a friendship different in quality from Andrews' friendship for Tagore, which was always coloured by his reverence for a poet-prophet ten years older than himself. With Gandhi, who was Andrews' near contemporary, it was a friendship of equals; they were "Mohan" and "Charlie" to each other from the first.

It was through Andrews that Tagore and Gandhi met personally for the first time. In 1914 Gandhi decided that the time had come for him to return to India, and he needed to find a temporary Indian home for the boys and teachers of his Phoenix Ashram in South Africa. Andrews arranged for them to spend their first months in India as guests of the Santiniketan community. They reached Santiniketan in December 1914; Gandhi and Kasturba arrived in India at the end of January, and visited Santiniketan in February-March 1915.

The Phoenix party had been given a house, and were following their own very simple rule of life. They had no servants and did all their own cooking and cleaning. The Santiniketan boys had no prejudice against manual or "menial" labour as such; they themselves had cleaned the roads and built the vedi (ceremonial platform) to welcome Gandhi and Kasturba, but they did have servants in the kitchen. Gandhi suggested that they might dispense with servants altogether, and run the kitchen themselves. The boys wel-

comed the idea enthusiastically, and so did most of their teachers, though some had doubts. Tagore himself commented that "the experiment is the key to *swaraj*", and encouraged the boys to go ahead. He foresaw that what they would learn from their labours in the kitchen would more than compensate for any loss in their "academic" programme. Gandhi helped them to launch the project, insisting on his own high standard of hygiene, and they certainly learned a great deal. In later years one of the boys involved wrote a vivid and humorous account of their experience. "Everyone realised," he commented, "how difficult it was to work with this man — and how much more difficult it was to avoid working with him!"[3]

Although Gandhi was able to stay only a few days, the experiment was carried on through the increasing heat of March and April, right up to the summer vacation in May. But when the school reopened it was not renewed. This was not merely because of laziness or lack of perseverance. The sheer size of the community raised real problems. The kitchen was catering for between 250 and 300 Santiniketan residents, and cooking for such a large number was a very different matter from doing so for 15 or 20 Phoenix boys. The huge, heavy vessels needed to prepare food for such numbers added greatly to the physical strain of the work. It was all too easy for what should have been education to degenerate into drudgery.

The project, in fact, raised the whole question of the optimum size of any educational community or group. Tagore himself believed that school classes should be limited to a dozen or fifteen children with a teacher-leader. His ideal, as has been said, was the ancient *gurukul,* where a group of students lived with their teacher as his family, and learned from him while they shared in a natural way in the cleaning, cooking, gardening and all the household chores. When the numbers become too big, there is no longer a natural family, but an institution — and problems arise. Santiniketan was too big for the daily work of a common kitchen to be a satisfactory educational experience. In later years, Gandhi's own edu-

cational community at Sevagram encountered the same kind of difficulty when it attempted to run one common kitchen for large numbers of people of varying ages; the educational value of the work was swamped by the pressure of numbers. Occasional large-scale community meals can be fun — and educational fun too — but regular daily "learning by living" is best achieved in smaller groups, not only for cooking, but for other creative activities of all kinds.

As the first World War drew to an end the mood in India was one of hopeful expectation. India had given willing and costly service to the allied cause, and she looked forward to being recognized, when the war was over, as an equal and respected partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. These hopes were rudely dashed. In 1919, war-time restrictions on personal liberty and on the press were re-imposed, in harsh terms, in the name of "law and order". India's bitter disappointment found expression in public protests, led by Gandhi, who called for an India-wide *hartal*. A *hartal* is a voluntary cessation of work, undertaken as a protest against something believed to be wrong. The hartal took place in early April, 1919. On April 12th, Tagore, who had followed events with the greatest interest, wrote a friendly, thoughtful letter to Gandhi. He feared then, as he had feared in 1905, any attempt to win an outward freedom by pressure, even "non-violent" pressure, before the nation had won real freedom by inward discipline. "Passive resistance," he wrote, "is a force; it can be used against truth, as well as for it. The danger grows stronger with the hope of success; to stand against wrong is itself victory."

The very next day, April 13th, a great public meeting of protest was held in the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar. The officer in charge of "law and order", General Dyer, opened fire on the motley crowd trapped in the confined space, and hundreds were killed and injured. When the news reached Tagore, he was profoundly shocked. He had received many official honours after his stature as a poet

had been recognised by the award, in 1913, of the Nobel Prize for Literature. He now wrote a dignified public letter in which he repudiated these honours, because they had been conferred by a government which had now forfeited his respect.

The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy led directly to the mass movement of non-cooperation which was launched by the Congress in August 1920. It was guided by Gandhi, now a popular national leader, who like Tagore renounced his own official honours as a symbol of his change of attitude to the ruling power.

By that time Tagore was away from home. He had gone to Europe and America to share his dream of a *Viswa-bharati*, an Indian world university, and to seek world-wide cooperation in making it a reality. Reports began to reach him of the tremendous impact Gandhi was making on the common people. Government officials themselves recognised it to be unique. "Never before," reported a member of the C.I.D., "has any political leader so stirred the masses to their very depths and received the homage of so many people, Hindus and Muslims alike."[4] Officialdom was puzzled, but Tagore knew where Gandhi's secret lay — in his passionate self-identification with the needy and the destitute. He had come to them, the poet wrote, "clad as one of themselves, talking to them in their own language. Here was the truth at last. The name of Mahatma is his true name. Who else has felt so many men of India to be of his own flesh and blood? Truth awakened Truth. What has happened is nothing less than the birth of freedom... Some notes of the music of this wonderful awakening floated over to me across the seas."

This was profoundly true, but when Tagore returned to Bengal in the middle of 1921, he became aware of other elements in the national movement which made him very uneasy. He feared that the non-cooperation movement was being poisoned, as the anti-partition movement of 1905 had been poisoned, by anger and greed.

The anger showed itself in the spirit of national vain-gloriousness which declared that "the West has *nothing* of value" to give. The greed showed itself in the blind belief that India could "get something of inestimable value dirt-cheap and in double-quick time" — could get *Swaraj*, in fact, by a year of mindless, mechanical spinning. "*Swaraj* worth having cannot be had cheap," Tagore repeated sternly. "India must find herself by giving (for that which is not given is lost), but to be able to give, she needs the power to receive." We must not surrender our greatest right, the right to reason and judge for ourselves, for the sake of any spurious short cuts to a merely external freedom.

The man who thus raised his voice in warning was one whose own belief in *swaraj* was not in doubt. His devotion to India, in the words of his great national song *India's Prayer*, had "flowered in love and borne fruit in work". In the years since 1905 his own thought had matured; he saw genuine *swaraj* in terms of villages where all "walls" of social discrimination are torn down, so that the village can act as a united community and take responsibility for the welfare of all its people in every aspect of life. Gandhi's vision of *swaraj* was a fulfilment of his own.

Yet in 1921 there was a temporary parting of the ways. Tagore expressed his misgivings in a long article *The Call of Truth*, published in *The Modern Review* in October 1921. Gandhi sought him out, and the two men met privately with Andrews in the Tagore family home in Calcutta. There is in existence a sketch of this meeting of the three friends by the poet's artist nephew Abanindranath, based, it is said, on impressions gained by peering through the keyhole of the door. It captures vividly Gandhi's confidence, Tagore's unresolved doubts, and Andrews' eagerness to follow the thoughts of both his friends.

Gandhi understood the poet's misgivings: "He fears that non-cooperation is a doctrine of separation, exclusiveness, narrowness

and negation. In conception, it is not; in practice, it may have failed. It is against compulsory cooperation with evil, with modern methods of exploitation backed by arms... Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good." He urged that his non-cooperation was intended to pave the way to honourable cooperation, and that he had no thought of erecting a "Chinese Wall" between India and the West. He welcomed Tagore's "wholesome reminder" of the danger of a mere blind obedience. "If we would gain *swaraj*," he wrote, "we must stand for Truth as we know it at whatever cost. Blind surrender to love is often more mischievous than forced surrender to a tyrant." But then he went on to describe, with deep feeling, the abject want which the *charkha* (the spinning wheel) might relieve, and which made spinning, in his view, a duty for all: "Let the poet spin like the rest!"

One of the best commentaries on the debate was written by Romain Rolland, the great European humanist who was a friend of both men: "Dark and tragic words these. The misery of the world rises up before the dream of art and cries, 'Dare deny me existence!' Who does not sympathise with Gandhi's passionate emotion and share it? And yet in his reply there *is* something that justifies Tagore's misgivings: '*Sileat poeta*! (Let the poet be silent). Obey without discussion. Spin!' " The differences remained; in the winter of 1921-22 Tagore quietly withdrew into his poet's corner. It was then that he wrote his great play *Mukta-dhara* (*The Free Current*), filled it with his own deep faith in freedom, and so made a unique contribution to the whole movement.

Mukta-dhara is a mountain stream whose waters, rushing down the slopes of the kingdom of Uttarakut, irrigate the land of Shivtarai below. Uttarakut holds Shivtarai as a vassal state, and to enforce its subjection the rulers of Uttarakut have determined to control the water on which the life of Shivtarai depends. By conscript labour, and at considerable cost in human lives, a great dam has just been completed. As the play opens the people of Uttarakut are pre-

paring to celebrate this triumph of engineering. The action takes place by the roadside, while the great "Machine", the engine-tower of the dam which imprisons the free current, stands sinister in the background, overshadowing even the temple of God. Beneath this symbol of the prostitution of science to human greed and tyranny the common people come and go. There are those from Uttarakut, many of them (but not all) proud and complacent, careless of human suffering; their servile school-masters teach a cheap contempt for the people of Shivtarai. The people of Shivtarai, oppressed and despairing, are ready to hit back. Their spiritual leader, Dhananjay, saint and singer, urges in speech and passionate song that only the patient courage of non-violence can save them, and urges them to "claim their kingdom" in this way. They have a champion in Abhijit, Crown Prince of Uttarakut, whose love of freedom and justice finds expression in his resolve to set at liberty the imprisoned waters of Mukta-dhara. He goes out alone to force the dam at its weakest point, knowing that he will be swept to his death as the leaping torrent breaks free.

Throughout the play, sannyasi devotees pass and re-pass across the stage. Their invocation of the Lord Shiva, the Unseen Avenger, forms the background of the human drama. Dhananjay's songs increase the awareness that much more than political justice is at stake. The play is brought to a magnificent close, as the saint's chant of solemn triumph welcomes the coming of Shiva Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance, symbol of an inviolate inner freedom, while the thunder of the Free Current rolls majestically in the distance.

Mukta-dhara is packed with meaning at many levels, personal, social, political. "No other play of Rabindranath expresses his political convictions with such directness and force," comments Edward Thompson in his study of the poet's work. Dhananjay's personality and words pointed plainly to Gandhi and Gandhi's message to India in 1921-22. Twenty years later, Marjorie was to

share the English translation, at which she was then working, with students all over India in the midst of the Quit India movement of 1942, and witnessed the power with which it spoke to them. Its message is still alive today, when the menacing "Machines" of modern armaments and modern dams overshadow the lives of the peoples of the world.

Gandhi paid another visit to Santiniketan in 1925. As he turned his attention more and more to the social implications of *swaraj*, and the healing of sectarian and caste divisions, he and Tagore came closer to one another, and the visit proved a refreshment of body and spirit. "Our friendship," Gandhi wrote, "has become all the richer for our disagreements... There is no competition between us. I may say in all humility that we complement each other's activities." The debate continued, but in a much more relaxed fashion than before. "It is essential," said Tagore, "that the responsibility of *swaraj* should be accepted fully, and not as a matter of homespun yarn alone." "Agreed," said Gandhi in effect, "but it must *begin* with the *charkha* because only people who have shed their idleness and learned to cooperate can build up the other benefits of *swaraj*." This reasoned defence of the charkha was to be coupled later with a condemnation of the "mechanical cult" of it as emphatic as Tagore's. "I say with all the conviction of experience," declared Gandhi, "that if the charkha is to be turned only mechanically, Gandhism deserves to be destroyed."[5]

In January 1930, soon after the Congress had passed its historic Independence resolution, Tagore visited Gandhi in his home at Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhi was preparing to lead the country in a fresh movement of non-cooperation, to be initiated by the great "salt march" from Sabarmati to the sea. Tagore found him in great spirits. "I hear you are getting ready for arrest-cure," he joked. "I wish they would give me one!" "How can they? You don't behave yourself!" teased his friend light-heartedly.

That particular "arrest-cure" eventually led to Gandhi's talks with Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, and to his participation in the meetings of the Round Table Conference in London in the autumn of 1931. There were strong elements in the conference who urged that the "rights" of the various minority communities would best be secured by organising them as separate political electorates. Gandhi believed that any such step would be disastrous, in that it would tend to bring into prominence those who took a narrowly sectional stand rather than those who put first the welfare of India as a whole. In particular, he warned the conference that he would "resist with his life" any proposal to apply the policy to the "untouchables". The conference broke up without agreement, leaving the decision on this crucial issue to the British authorities.

Very soon after Gandhi returned home he was arrested again, and he was still in jail in Poona in September 1932 when the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, announced a "communal award" based on separate electorates, in which the "untouchables" were included. Gandhi declared that he would fast unto death unless this provision were changed. He longed for a message of support from Tagore, but none had arrived. Early in the morning of September 20th, the day the fast was to begin, he wrote a special letter to the poet. "You have been a true friend," he said, "because you have been a candid friend. If your heart approves, I want your blessing; it will sustain me." But even before this letter could be despatched, the longed-for telegram arrived. "It is worth sacrificing precious life," ran the message, "for India's unity and her social integrity." Tagore sent Gandhi the "reverence and love" of the Santiniketan community; at Santiniketan, he called the community together. "This is Mahatmaji's ultimatum," he told them, "against our moral weakness. It may be our misfortune to lose him in the fight, but the gift of the fight will be passed on to every one of us. It is a gift to be accepted humbly, but with the determination to carry through the struggle to the end." The moral weakness which Gandhi challenged was that of the so-called "higher" castes, whose

arrogant callousness had made so many of their victims feel that a separate political identity was their only hope.

India did not lose Gandhi in that particular battle, but the danger was very real. Leaders of the communities involved met urgently in Poona to hammer out agreed counter-proposals to the British award. But by the time the "Poona Pact" was signed and wired to London in the very early hours of September 25th, Gandhi's life hung in the balance. On the 26th morning the doctors declared that "there is now danger, even if the fast is broken." That same morning the British Government's response was made known, and after studying it in consultation with his friends, Gandhi decided that it was satisfactory. Tagore had come hurrying from Bengal, and was present when the fast was broken. At the prayers held before Gandhi accepted his orange juice he sang one of his own Bengali hymns from *Gitanjali.* "I wish you had been here to see Bapu and Gurudev* embracing one another then," wrote Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's beloved secretary, to Andrews in London. "Bapu's face was turned towards me, and his eyes were wet with tears of joy." The joy had healing power; slowly, Gandhi recovered his strength.

Andrews, in London, had had his part in the happy outcome. For months he had been in close, friendly touch with British statesmen and officials, patiently and courteously explaining Gandhi's point of view. When the news of Gandhi's fast came through he had redoubled his efforts, and on September 23rd he was assured that the British Government would at once accept any "practicable" agreement between caste Hindus and "untouchables". Late the next night, Saturday September 24th, the news of the Poona Pact came through.** Ramsay Macdonald had left London for his

---

* Bapu: "father": the affectionate name which Gandhi's younger fellow workers habitually used.
Gurudev: "revered teacher"; the title commonly given to Tagore.

** The slight discrepancy in date reflects the $5\frac{1}{2}$ hour time-lag between India and Britain.

country retreat at Chequers, and other ministers were out of town for the weekend. By seven o'clock on Sunday morning Andrews was on his way to Chequers, and then, all that day, from interview to interview. He was known and respected, and every door was open to him. The Prime Minister's decision had to be taken immediately, for time was all-important; it must also be rightly worded. As in other crises of Andrews' life, his sense of divine upholding cleared his brain and sharpened his intellectual powers. There was no false step.[6]

The next day was Gandhi's birthday by the Indian calendar. At the little gathering of friends, Tagore quoted the Upanishad:

> He is the One luminous, Creator of all, Mahatma,
> Always in the hearts of the people enshrined.

It is fitting that Gandhi should be called Mahatma, he said, for he is enshrined in the hearts of the people more firmly now than ever before. The news of the Pact had brought a great upsurge of goodwill. Christian leaders appealed to their own community to abandon any claim to separate electorates, and there were fresh efforts to bring Hindus and Muslims together.

Gandhi himself concentrated on the "untouchables", and early in 1933 he began his new weekly *Harijan* for their service. He had already used this name *Harijan* (people of God) in his Gujarati weekly *Navajivan* in place of the degrading name "untouchable". Followers of all religions, he said, know God as Helper of the helpless; these most helpless ones are specially His people. "When caste Hindus have got rid of untouchability of their own conviction," he wrote, "we shall all be called Harijans, because we shall have found favour with God."*

---

* It is ironic that 50 years later the name Harijan is itself rejected as "degrading", because the people of India have not yet "got rid of untouchability of their own conviction".

On the front page of the first issue of the new weekly appeared Tagore's free English translation of the Bengali poem by Satyendranath Datta, *The Cleanser*:

> Why do they shun your touch, my friend,
> and call you unclean?
> You, whom cleanliness follows at every step,
> making sweet the earth and air for our dwelling?
> Lord Shiva saved the world from poison once,
> drinking it himself.
> You, with the same divine long-suffering,
> Save the world every day from its defilements.
> Come, my friend, my hero,
> Give us courage to serve men as you serve
> Even while they brand you with the mark of shame.

In the fight against untouchability Gandhi and Tagore were completely united, but in 1934 they had another difference of opinion. In January that year a disastrous earthquake devastated North Bihar. Gandhi declared that the disaster was a "nemesis for the sin of untouchability", and Tagore reacted with "painful surprise". "We are immensely grateful to Mahatmaji," he wrote, "for inspiring his countrymen to free themselves from fear and feebleness; we feel profoundly hurt when any words of his encourage them in unreason - unreason whose blind urges are at war with our freedom and our self-respect." Gandhi's reply was that the human mind cannot presume to understand the working of the cosmic law, that God and His law are one, and that the spiritual and the physical aspects of the Law are also one and inseparable. The debate points up the fact that the two men had spent their early formative years in very different mental climates: Gandhi amid the piety of a traditional Vaishnava household, Tagore amid the rational humanism inspired by Rammohan Roy. Their differences remained, but the foundations of their friendship were too firm to be shaken by the argument.

Before Gandhi visited Santiniketan again the Second World War had begun. By that time Marjorie was living in Santiniketan, and she well remembers the evening of September 3rd, 1939, the

day that war was declared. The wide horizons of Santiniketan were filled with the pageantry of a sunset of a rare and breath-taking majesty and beauty. It seemed as if the dear, familiar world were bidding a reluctant farewell. The slowly darkening skies foreshadowed the long night of uncertainty, of possible unguessed disaster. Many hearts were heavy with foreboding. At the end of the year C.F. Andrews came back after a long absence to his beloved Indian home, and was most affectionately welcomed. But he was worn out in body and suffering in spirit. Gandhi was to arrive in February 1940, but before the day came Andrews had become so unwell that he had to enter a hospital in Calcutta.

Gandhi was received at a simple ceremony in the mango grove, and then Tagore took him to the little mud cottage which had been prepared for him. Tagore had recently had it built in the local village style. "Here is your house," he said, "designed by a poet and made of clay." "Well, so are we all, are we not," smiled Gandhi. "Here perhaps," went on Tagore, "you may be able to rest for a little while from the lime-light." "But what about the sunlight?" retorted Gandhi. "How am I to escape that here?"* This light-hearted repartee went on as the two sat together during the afternoon. A tray of tea was brought in. "Look, here comes your poison," teased Gandhi. "Ye-e-es", admitted Tagore as he took up his cup, "but it's a very *slow* poison!"

In the evening there was a special performance of Tagore's dance-drama C*handalika.* The heroine is an "untouchable" girl who is awakened to knowledge of her own humanity and womanhood at the touch of a disciple of the Buddha. The choice of the play was a fitting tribute to Gandhi, who, like the Buddha, had broken through the barriers of caste to the universal humanity within. It symbolised a bond of unity between the "Gurudev" and the "Mahatma"

---

* The name Rabindranath means "Lord of the Sun". The anecdote is related by Dr. Amiya C. Chakravarty who was present.

which was far more significant than their differences of temperament, method and emphasis.

During this visit, Andrews was much in the thought of both his great friends, and when Gandhi left Santiniketan he went straight to Andrews' bedside in Calcutta. It was to be their last meeting. Andrews was gravely ill, his voice a mere whisper, but he spoke with hope and confidence. "*Swaraj is* coming, Mohan.* Both Englishmen and Indians can make it come if they will." A few weeks later, on April 5th, Andrews died. As Gandhi looked back over twentyfive years of partnership, he pointed to these words as Andrews' "legacy" to India: the faith that "the best Indians and the best Englishmen", working together, could overcome all obstacles in the way of freedom.

Meanwhile Britain's allies in Europe were facing military disaster. Nazi armies overran one country after another; Britain, left almost alone, faced the German forces across the narrow English Channel. The whole of India was moved; Gandhi and Tagore were both moved profoundly. "I feel as though my own home were being bombed," said Gandhi as he read of the air attacks on London. Tagore's thoughts went to his many friends in all parts of Europe, not least in Germany itself. His friends would be unwelcome, he knew, in any Nazi state. What was happening to them? There was no hope of any news across the barriers of war.

In those dark days Tagore's mind turned more and more to the message of the Buddha. He would ask again and again for the singing of a hymn which he had written in 1927 as part of another play, *Natir Puja* (*The Dancing Girl's Worship*) which like *Chandalika* was based on the Buddhist tradition:

---

* Andrews, who was about the same age as Gandhi, was probably the only person, during the later years, who habitually called Gandhi by his personal name.

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred.
Crooked its paths, tangled its bonds of greed...
The hearts of men are anguished with the poison of self-seeking,
with a thirst that knows no end...
Thou giver of immortal gifts,
Give us the power of renunciation
and claim from us our pride.

O serene, O free,
In thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

Was not the spirit of the Buddha, Tagore asked himself, born anew in our own age in Gandhi's steadfast, loving non-violence?

Three of his own plays, as we have seen, had been specially inspired by the Buddha and the Mahatma. Would not an English translation help to give them wider currency, perhaps contribute to the calming of that "delirium of hatred"? One day he sent for Marjorie, who had already undertaken some other translations at his request, and asked her if she would tackle these plays: *Chandalika*, *Natir Puja*, *Muktadhara*. Marjorie began the work, and was able to consult him once or twice as it progressed, but he did not live to see it finished.[7]

In May 1941 Tagore completed his eightieth year. The message which he delivered on that occasion is called *Crisis in Civilisation*; it may rightly be regarded as his last testament to India. He begins by describing the warm admiration for "human goodness in an alien race" which he had felt as a youth when he read of the "large-hearted radicalism" of men like the English friend of India, John Bright. Later, he goes on, his attitude had undergone "a tragic change". He had lost faith in "western" civilisation, as he had experienced the terrible poverty of the Indian people, and the "contempt" with which their misery was treated by their rulers. He had come to reject British rule, in fact, for much the same reasons as Gandhi did, and he felt the same scorn as Gandhi did for the British "gift" of law

and order.* What kind of India, he asks sadly, will the British leave behind them when they go?

But in spite of this disillusionment, Tagore declares, "I shall not commit the sin of losing faith in man." He goes on to pay tribute to the men and women from many nations, and especially from Britain itself, who have confirmed and vindicated his faith in humanity. He expresses his hope that "a new Saviour, a new Buddha, may yet be born among us".

The message ends with words of solemn warning, couched in the sonorous language of the *Manusmrti*:

> By unrighteousness man prospers,
> he gains what seems desirable,
> he defeats his enemies,
> but he perishes at the root.[8]

Those ancient words express Gandhi's insight as fully as Tagore's, and they are even more urgently relevant today than they were when Tagore uttered them in the dark days of 1941.

During the previous year Tagore had begun to prepare a new production of his play, *The Post Office*. He wrote a new song to be sung at the end of the play, at the death-bed of its valiant-hearted boy hero Amal. The production never took place, the poet's failing strength was no longer equal to the task. At his request the song was sung as his own requiem, at the memorial meeting at Santiniketan on the evening of his death in August 1941:

> In front lies the ocean of peace.
> O Helmsman, sail out to the open sea.
> May the bounds of earth dissolve,
> may the mighty universe take him in her arms,
> and may he know in his fearless heart
> the Great Unknown.

---

* Compare Gandhi's famous letter to the Viceroy on the eve of his Salt March (12.3.1930): "The only law the nation knows is the will of the British administration; the only public peace the nation knows is the peace of the public prison".

Chapter II
Years of Apprenticeship
1927-38

We must now go back to the years 1927-28 and the beginnings of our own interest in Gandhi. In 1928 when Marjorie arrived in Madras, the Simon Commission was touring the country. The Commission had been appointed to study developments in India since 1919 and make recommendations to the British Parliament about the form of the country's future government. But not a single Indian had been included in its membership, and naturally India was angered and antagonised. Marjorie watched the long black-flag processions which paraded through the streets of Madras, as of every other Indian city. "Go back Simon," they shouted, "Simon, go back!!" Almost every political group in India, "moderate" and "extremist" alike, joined in a country-wide boycott of the Commission's proceedings. The few groups who wanted to cooperate with it found themselves isolated; the Aga Khan's followers were expelled from the Muslim League because of their support for the Commission, while the League itself, along with all other national parties, joined vigorously in the boycott.

Gandhi himself had taken no direct part in the political protests. In 1922, when the non-cooperation movement had ended in tragic violence, he had received a six-year prison sentence. He was released on health grounds in 1924, but he felt himself morally

bound to refrain from political activities until the expiry of his original term of imprisonment. Instead, he devoted himself to his "constructive programme", to fostering all the social and economic activities which might promote the spirit of equality, mutual trust, and cooperative hard work — all the things, in fact, that he and Tagore had had in mind when they talked in 1925 about the striving for swaraj. "The constructive programme," Gandhi had written, "is the truthful and non-violent way of winning *swaraj*; it is designed to build up the nation from the very bottom. If all the forty crores (400 million) of our people were to busy themselves with its wholesale fulfilment, it must mean complete independence, including the ousting of foreign domination. When the critics laugh, what they mean is that forty crores of people will never cooperate in the effort. No doubt there is considerable truth in that jibe. My answer is, it is still worth the attempt. Given an indomitable will and a band of earnest workers, it is as workable as any other programme and more so than most. Anyway I have no substitute for it, if the movement is to be based on non-violence."[1] A part of the constructive programme which was specially close to Gandhi's heart was the growth of "heart-unity" between Hindus and Muslims; when the Indian National Congress met in Madras at the end of 1927 it had dealt with the small daily sources of friction between the two communities in a spirit of friendly give-and-take. While the meeting was in session, news came of the death of the beloved Muslim doctor Hakim Ajmal Khan of Delhi. Gandhi pleaded that the best form of memorial to him would be the achievement of lasting Hindu-Muslim friendship: "Hakim Saheb served *all* the needy without distinction; let us do the same."

When Jehangir first came back from Cambridge to Colaba memories of Gandhi's leadership in the non-cooperative movement of 1920-22 were very much alive. Bombay was still an open, leisurely city, and Jehangir used to exercise himself and his horse by riding from Colaba to Marine Lines and back along the quiet, empty roads. Part of his journey took him past Churchgate Station and he

would sometimes hear the passengers in the local trains raising their slogans: "Boycott British goods! *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*!"*

In Madras Gandhi's name was equally familiar. Very soon after Marjorie's arrival she was introduced to a vigorous group called the International Fellowship. It had been founded in 1922 by a young Indian Christian, A.A. Paul, who had been inspired by Gandhi's wonderful speech at his trial, and his persistent personal friendliness towards his political opponents. "Men composing the Government," Gandhi had written, "are not to be regarded as enemies. To regard them as such would be contrary to the non-violent spirit. Part we must, but as friends."[1] The Madras Fellowship tried to follow this principle and to demonstrate in practice that Indian and English people could be good friends, and learn to understand each other's point of view, even though they might come to different conclusions. Many said this was impossible, but in fact Indians of a great variety of religious and political outlook were attracted into the Fellowship, as well as British and other foreign residents. The idea spread to other cities, and local Fellowships sprang up throughout India. They kept in touch with one another through an all-India Council, and early in 1928 Gandhi had invited the Council to hold its meeting at Sabarmati. One of Marjorie's colleagues in Bentinck School had been among the delegates from Madras, and had returned deeply impressed by Gandhi's "shining goodness and exquisite courtesy".

Towards the end of 1928 the Madras International Fellowship held a special weekend conference at which Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachariar) was the main speaker. Rajaji was then Gandhi's chief fellow-worker in Tamil Nad, and he spoke of the importance of Gandhi's constructive programme. His words carried conviction and authority, based as they were on the experience of his own ashram at Tiruchengode in the Salem District. The meet-

---

* "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi!"

ing with Rajaji, and his subsequent generous friendship, opened up new perspectives for Marjorie. She visited the ashram, where they taught her to spin, and told her of their struggle against untouchability and all that it had cost them.

Jehangir's first introduction was to a different side of Gandhi's work. When he returned to Bombay in 1926 he joined his brother Behram, who by then was directing the family cotton business, and began to learn his trade. At first he felt almost like an alien in his native city, and sorely missed the easy-going friendships of Cambridge. He soon found, however, that there were other young Cambridge and Oxford men in Bombay, a number of whom were lawyers. They made him very welcome at the Bar Gymkhana, where he could relax among congenial companions who shared his sporting interests. The members of the Gymkhana indulged in the same kind of frank, good-tempered argument about public affairs as was carried on in the International Fellowship in Madras. Jehangir met men of wide experience and varied outlook, prominent among whom was M.A. Jinnah, an ardent secular nationalist and the idol of the youth of Bombay.

Jinnah had been among those who welcomed Gandhi on his return to India in January 1915. At a meeting in Bombay, organised by the Gurjar (Gujarati) Sabha, he spoke with warm appreciation both of Gandhi's labour and sacrifice for the vindication of India's honour in South Africa, and of Kasturba's brave and patient endurance. They should be made welcome, he said, by the whole of India, for the whole of India, Hindus and Mahomedans together, had united in support of their struggle. Now, Jinnah had added, the two great sister communities must approach the problems of India itself in the same spirit, so that India might be absolutely unanimous in voicing her demands. Gandhi had responded to this welcome with equal warmth; he was particularly glad, he said. to find Jinnah identified with the Gurjar Sabha, for in South Africa the term "Gujarati" was unfortunately used only for

Hindus.* He went on to quote Syed Ahmed Khan's saying that Hindus and Mahomedans are the two eyes of India; for clarity of vision India needs them both.

Jinnah had made another outstanding speech in 1917, at a meeting of the Muslim League. "What we demand," he said, "is the immediate transfer of the substantial power of government, not to the Hindus, not to the Mahomedans, but to the people of this country. Hindus and Mahomedans as one nation will make that demand, and there will be no going back on it." Jinnah did not go back on that position for many years. By 1920, it is true, he had differences with Gandhi, but they were not about the one-nation principle. He was a brilliant constitutional lawyer, and he believed strongly in constitutional methods of agitation; he, therefore, parted company with Gandhi when Gandhi called for direct action, for mass non-cooperation with the Government.

Jinnah feared that an appeal for mass action might have dangerous consequences, and his fears were not without some justification. In 1920, as we have seen, Gandhi attracted Hindus and Muslims alike. But in the hands of lesser men, appeals to the masses could too easily become semi-religious appeals to Hindu masses. In the tide of emotion that swept the country in those days Gandhi was sometimes hailed by Hindus as a new *avatar*;** stories circulated about his "miracles", and in some places there was talk of "Gandhi-*puja*". Such things were naturally distasteful to Muslims. They were very distasteful to Gandhi himself, who constantly insisted, like Tagore, that one must be guided by reason, not by emotion.

It was natural that these various aspects of the national movement, and Gandhi's part in it, should be keenly debated at the Bar

---

* The same bad practice existed in some circles in Bengal, where "a Bengali" meant only a Hindu, even though Bengali-speaking Muslims were at least as numerous as Hindus.

** *avatar*: an incarnation of God.

Gymkhana. Jinnah would express his misgivings, while some of the younger men, including Purushottamdas Tricumdas and M.C. Chagla, defended Gandhi's methods. Jehangir listened to the debates, and conceived a growing respect and admiration for Chagla.

Chagla had a passionate belief in democracy, and in India's future as a "secular" state. Gandhi's "secularism", he pointed out,[2] was the expression of a spiritual non-violence which was as important as physical non-violence, of a tolerance and compassion which emanated from a deeply religious nature. Gandhi believed that there was an unbreakable bond between all truly religious men, and that therefore religion should *bridge* differences and make possible a genuinely "secular" polity. Chagla, whose own background was Muslim, became one of Jehangir's closest friends; under his guidance Jehangir began to think as an Indian, and no longer to look at India from a British point of view.

The united boycott of the Simon Commission had encouraged constructive planning, and in 1927-28 an All-Parties Conference set to work to prepare united *Indian* proposals for constitutional change. A special Commission drew up a scheme based on the principle of one common Indian electorate, while it also proposed that special and minority interests should be ensured fair representation by the provision of reserved seats. The Commission's report was endorsed by the Muslim League; Chagla, who was then secretary of the League, signed it on the League's behalf during a temporary absence from India of Jinnah who was President.

Hopes of real progress and unity ran high, but by the end of 1928 they were dashed. When Jinnah returned to India he refused to accept the Muslim League's endorsement of the "Nehru Report" (so-called because Motilal Nehru had chaired the Commission), and insisted that the League should withdraw its support. Jinnah's action came as a bewildering shock for as we have seen he was an ardent nationalist and had always insisted on the impor-

tance of unity between India's two "great sister communities". Chagla, who had been Jinnah's junior at the Bar and knew him well describes his attitude as "an enigma".* Chagla himself felt so strongly that Jinnah's action was anti-democratic and unjustified that he resigned from the Muslim League on the issue, with Jehangir's whole-hearted sympathy.

By about 1929 Jehangir had become much disturbed by other experiences. His brother Behram had insisted that he should acquire a further knowledge of the cotton trade so as to be able to share responsibility for the business. "You can't learn about cotton in Bombay," he said. "You must go and visit the cotton-growing districts, meet the producers, and get to know the people with whom you will have to deal." Jehangir therefore travelled widely, to the Khandesh and Vidarbha cotton districts in Bombay Presidency itself, and to the cotton regions of the far north-west and the far south, such as Montgomery and Lyallpur in what is now Pakistan, and Coimbatore in Tamil Nad. These travels brought him face to face, for the first time, with some of the realities of Indian village life. He was shocked, as Tagore had been before him, by the terrible poverty of the people; like Tagore he was even more shocked by the contempt with which their misery was treated by their rulers.

The thing came to a focus in an unforgettable scene on a country road in Amravati District: a gang of road-menders, men and women breaking stones. One woman gasped dreadfully as she worked; she was in the last stages of T.B. Jehangir spoke to the foreman, took her away in his car, and cared for her as well as he could. She died, but the foreman's words went on ringing in his ears: "Why worry? If one dies, there are hundreds more waiting to take her place." "And what," Jehangir had demanded, "does the British Raj have to say about that?" — "The white sahibs? Oh, they say the same: what does it matter?"

---

* *Roses in December,* Chagla's autobiography

Such comments rankled all the more bitterly because of the arrogant racialism of many local British officials. Jehangir found that as an Indian he was excluded from the white men's clubs in the little district towns, and yet was expected, being a "moneyed" man, to share their callous attitude towards the poor.

During these journeys Jehangir had been reading Gandhi's then newly-published book *The Story of my Experiments with Truth.* In the context of his own experiences it made a deep impression. His personal perplexities were increased by the death in 1928 of his beloved elder brother Behram. Besides the shock of grief, there was the knowledge that his own family and business responsibilities would now be heavier. Would Gandhi, he wondered, be able to help him? He decided that on his next visit to the firm's branch office at Broach (Bharuch) in Gujarat, he would go on to Ahmedabad and seek out Gandhi for himself.

In the Sabarmati Ashram some of Gandhi's associates were puzzled by his visit. Why, they wondered, should a seemingly prosperous young business man have any interest in Gandhi? "A meeting with him might upset the whole pattern of your life," Narharibhai Parikh warned him. "Are you prepared for that?" But Parikh's wife realised how troubled he was, and comforted him with motherly words of understanding.

Gandhi was alone. He looked up from his spinning and smiled a welcome. "Come in, come in", he said, and then added, as he looked more closely at the young man: "You have a load on your mind. What is it?"

"Not exactly a load Gandhiji; but I do feel confused, that's true."

"Come and sit down," said Gandhi. "Get yourself a chair, if you wish."

Jehangir refused the chair and sat down with Gandhi on the ground. They began to talk, Gandhi in Gujerati, his visitor in English.

"Can't you speak Gujarati?" asked Gandhi.

"I speak it badly, I'm more at ease in English. Is there anything wrong in that?" asked Jehangir a little defiantly. "The English are good people; I owe them a great deal."

"I agree with you," responded Gandhi warmly. "They *are* good people." He spoke with emphasis but he did not elaborate, and after a pause the young man spoke of his own sense of isolation. "I haven't found anyone here yet," he said, "with whom I can feel so much at home as I do with my English friends. We Parsees aren't good Indians, you know".

"Is that true?" asked Gandhi. "What about Dadabhai Naoroji? What about Pherozeshah Mehta? Weren't they good Indians?* What about *you*?"

It seemed time to counter-attack. "What do you mean by a good Indian?" the young man demanded. "Are you a good Indian?"

Gandhi did not answer at once. He closed his eyes, cleared his throat, and paused to give weight to his words. "Mankind is one," he said at last, "and I am a servant of mankind. I am born an Indian; I try to be a good Indian in order that I may be a good member of the human race. I am also born a Hindu, and as a loyal Hindu I claim my passport, so that I may move freely and in friendship among people of every religion."

---

* These two Parsee citizens of Bombay had been outstanding national leaders from the 1870s onwards, and during the early years of the Indian National Congress.

These words were a simple, powerful expression of Gandhi's belief in the principle of swadeshi, the principle that one should base one's life on the resources "of one's own country". Many of Gandhi's visitors, especially those who moved in "international circles", would query his insistence on *swadeshi* because it seemed to them too narrow an ideal. Gandhi would patiently explain, as he explained in one of his prefaces to his booklet about the constructive programme, that *swadeshi* seemed to him a necessary part of a truly universal outlook. There could be no genuine care for the welfare of humanity as a whole without a care for the well-being of one's own neighbours and neighbourhood. As for *swadeshi* in religious matters, it means a humble recognition that one's own religious experience is inevitably and inextricably rooted in the religious culture of one's own society. If it is to be a living experience it must remain rooted, so that the very security of its roots may set it free to seek fearlessly for enrichment by friendly intercourse with people whose roots are elsewhere. In a famous passage written in 1921 Gandhi had expressed his conviction in different imagery: "Mine is not a religion of the prison-house. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, *but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any*." (Emphasis added)

Jehangir would have liked to explore this subject, but he did not wish to take too much of Gandhi's time, and he turned to his personal problems. "Gandhiji," he asked, "what am I to do? I have to carry on this cotton business because so many people are dependent on it, but I'm not happy about it. For one thing, I think we charge farmers too high an interest on our advances."

"What do you charge?" asked Gandhi. When he was told his eyes twinkled. "I'm a Gujarati *bania*,* you know! I would guess

---

* *bania*: caste of tradesmen.

that my fellow-banias charge about three times what you do! But of course you must follow your conscience."

"How would it be to charge the same rate as the banks charge us?"

"Oh," said Gandhi gaily, "you would surely be justified in taking one or two per cent more than *that*!"

This light-hearted banter encouraged Jehangir to ask another question. "Here we are talking business, Gandhiji. Please tell me, what is your business?"

Immediately Gandhi became serious. "*My* business," he answered quietly, "is to get rid of the terrible poverty of our people. Our foreign rulers do not seem to care, and what is worse, our own prosperous classes do not care. But that is the purpose of everything I do. India's spine is bent double under this load of poverty. It makes her servile. I want to see her walk upright and free."

Here, thought Jehangir, was the heart of the matter, the response to the poverty which had haunted him on his travels. He stood up to take leave. "You have given me much to think about, Gandhiji," he said, "and I am very grateful. I must not take more of your time now; perhaps you will allow me to come again later." But Gandhi did not let him go without a final word. "Young man," he said, "you have come to me for guidance. I can offer you nothing, except tears of blood."

Many years later Jehangir was to hear that agonised, revealing phrase again. But he had no further personal contact with Gandhi himself for a long time. During the thirties, however, he came into touch with some of the leaders of Gandhi's constructive programme in Bombay and elsewhere. The first of these was Verrier Elwin, a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, who had spent his first years in

India in Poona. There he had joined the Poona International Fellowship, and had been a delegate to the Council meeting at Sabarmati in January 1928. In Sabarmati he too came under Gandhi's spell, wondered at the "beauty and dignity" of his bearing, and was deeply touched by the devotion to the poor which inspired all the work of the ashram. During the next few years he had met Gandhi frequently, and had been present when Gandhi was arrested in Bombay in 1932. As Gandhi gaily said goodbye to him he had given him one of his special messages of goodwill to the British. "Tell your people," he said, "that I love them as I do my own; I would never do anything consciously to harm them."[3]

Soon after this, Gandhi's friend Jamnalal Bajaj had encouraged Verrier to settle and work among the aboriginal tribes of Gondwana. From time to time Verrier would visit Bombay to raise funds for his work. Jehangir attended one of his public meetings and was much impressed. Verrier identified himself openly with the cause of India's freedom, and his love for the Gond people was clear beyond a doubt. Jehangir made friends with him. They were drawn together by affection for Gandhi, and by their shared desire to help in the struggle against poverty. Jehangir also respected Verrier's independence of judgment; Verrier did not hesitate to express reservations about some aspects of Gandhi's programme, with a frankness which Gandhi himself welcomed.

Through Verrier Elwin, Jehangir met another outstanding "constructive worker", Amritlal V. Thakkar, whom everyone affectionately called "Thakkar Bapa". Thakkar Bapa was a little older than Gandhi. He was an engineer, but in 1914 he had given up his good professional prospects in order to work in G.K. Gokhale's Servants of India Society among the "untouchable" sweepers of Bombay. "Mr. Gokhale," he had commented, "can command lakhs of rupees, but he cannot secure devoted workers." He was with Gokhale when Gandhi returned to India in 1915, and was present at the talks between them. From then on he had been associated

with Gandhi in various ways. In 1917 he had inquired into questions of land revenue in Kaira; in 1920 he had given outstanding service in flood relief in Orissa; he had become a champion of the rights of the aboriginal peoples, and in 1932, as a trusted friend of Harijans, he had taken part in the talks which led to the Poona Pact and so enabled Gandhi to break his fast. As Jehangir got to know him better, he came to share Gandhi's high opinion of him. "Here," Gandhi would declare, clapping Thakkar affectionately on the shoulder, "is the *real* Mahatma!"

The poverty which these men worked with Gandhi to remove is still with us, perhaps more terrible than ever. The poor are still ambassadors of Truth — the harsh truth that we, the secure and well-fed, still care so little for the hungry, sick and destitute. Gandhi cared deeply, passionately. He longed to be one with the poorest, and step by step he stripped himself of all possessions in order to identify himself with "starved humanity". For him this was part and parcel of the practice of non-violence and truth. What some regarded as trivial parsimony was no triviality for him. His carefully-sharpened stubs of pencil, his articles written on the backs of used envelopes, his refusal to spend money on a letter when a postcard would serve,* his scrupulous accounts accurate to the last pice (half-pence), were among the things that Truth required of him. And although he declared that he himself was not humble enough to be fully one with the poorest, the poor of India recognised that he *did* care, and responded to him as to a trusted friend.

Many years later Jehangir accompanied Gandhi on one of his railway journeys. At every station crowds of poor villagers pressed round the compartment, eager for a glimpse of Gandhi's face. "These huge numbers frighten me," Jehangir confessed. "Why do they come? What will happen when you are gone?"

---

* In India, then and now, a postcard may be sent for a fraction of the price of a letter.

"They see my goodwill in my eyes," Gandhi replied, "and it gives them hope. Don't be afraid, if my work is good it will go on without me."

Bombay, one of the great cotton markets of the world, inevitably felt the repercussions of Gandhi's campaign for khadi (handspun and handwoven cloth) and the boycott of foreign cloth during the years following 1930. The Bombay cloth merchants themselves undertook a six-day *hartal*. The cotton merchants were not then directly involved, but they made their sympathies known. Jehangir was one of those who influenced the Bombay Cotton Exchange in its decision to support the freedom movement and the principle of *swadeshi*. In commercial circles there was also great interest in the struggle of the Scindia Shipping Company to break the monopoly of British interests in the Indian shipping industry. It was a gallant fight, and it succeeded. Jehangir became a staunch supporter of the company and a close friend of Shanti Kumar Morarji, the son of the founder.

The Morarjis owned a house and land in Juhu, on the sea-coast north of Bombay, and Jehangir was much attracted by a simple three-room shack of wood and bamboo, which was tucked away in a grove of trees in a corner of the property, overlooking the Juhu beach. This he bought, and from time to time he would spend a few days there, away from the pressures of Bombay. There he occasionally had glimpses of Gandhi, who sometimes stayed at the Birla house in Juhu when on visits to Bombay. Gandhi would take his morning and evening walks along the beach, and his prayer meetings were, as always, open to all. Jehangir attended them, sitting on the fringe of the crowd, but he did not then seek any further personal interview. It did not seem appropriate to thrust himself upon Gandhi without some special reason. Quietly he involved himself in work for the poor, especially for the *adivasi* (aboriginal) tribes; meanwhile, because of his relatively prominent position on the Cotton Exchange, and his known sympathy with the freedom

movement, he had also become one of the many whose movements were shadowed by the police.

In Madras, Marjorie was discovering new dimensions of the constructive programme, especially as it affected women. Distinguished women had already been playing an active part in the life of Madras and the struggle for freedom. Many more, inspired by Gandhi, came out of their homes to join the non-cooperation movement of 1930. They undertook large-scale and effective picketing of foreign cloth shops and drink shops, and did so with a quiet courage and dignity which won them much respect. Some of these brave women had previously led such sheltered lives that when their picketing hours were over they did not know how to go home alone, and had to wait for husbands or sons to come and escort them.

Marjorie's own daily work as a teacher in a girls' school was shaped by these experiences. One of her colleagues had been inspired by Gandhi, another by Tagore, as she had been by Rajaji. They explored together how the children in their charge might be prepared for swaraj, for responsible freedom. The school was open to girls of any caste or creed, to city girls and village girls alike. Could they learn to discard the traditional prejudices and to break down the "narrow dividing walls" between their various communities? Could they be helped to grow up into women of courage and dignity like those who were picketing the drink shops, worthy citizens of the free India of the future?

Bentinck school was small enough to work as a real community. We challenged the prevalent school ethic of competition, and stressed cooperation —- cooperation for what Gandhi called sarvodaya, the benefit of *all*. We abolished prizes, and the self-centred rivalry they provoked, and encouraged the quicker children to help the slower ones in their academic work; they did it much more effectively than adults could do! Physical education

programmes were not planned to train a few star performers to win cups, but to improve *every* child's health and skill; here too the naturally gifted children helped the others. "It won't work," said the sceptics, as they still say. It did work. The children themselves swept and cleaned the buildings and compound, and cared for class gardens and libraries, learning the responsibilities of citizenship. One day at the end of the lunch interval Marjorie saw a senior Brahmin girl humbly and quietly clearing away some used (and therefore "polluted") leaf plates left lying about by her careless juniors, some of them children of the "lowest" castes. Gandhi's standard of citizenship in action!

The years in Bentinck School taught Marjorie to appreciate the central importance of that mastery of the mother tongue on which both Tagore and Gandhi insisted. Tagore's stand has already been described. Gandhi too held firmly to the same principle: "I would not have a single Indian forget, neglect, or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular[4]... We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we borrow another, we impoverish our own. The medium of a foreign language through which higher education has been imparted in India has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury; we are too near our own times to judge the enormity of the damage."[5]

Even among national workers, a lack of confidence in the use of the mother tongue was still fairly common. Marjorie sometimes invited one or other of the distinguished Madras women who were in the forefront of the national struggle to come to the school and tell the children about their work. They would agree to come, but very often they wanted to speak in English. "No, please speak in Tamil," Marjorie would say, "so that the children can fully understand." The visitor, whose own schooldays had usually been spent in an "English-medium" school, would object: "Oh, but I can't express myself properly in Tamil, I should make mistakes!" "The

children won't worry about your grammar," Marjorie would argue, "but they do want to follow what you say". In the end, Tamil it would be, and everyone (except possibly the speaker) was happy.

School experience also taught Marjorie that a sound knowledge of one's own language is the best foundation for acquiring the mastery of any other language. Girls who began English very late, but with a good grounding in their mother tongue, were among her most successful pupils. Effective learning of any foreign language depends upon a sound understanding of the structure of one's own, and on adequate motivation and opportunity. When these conditions are present, it can be done at any age. The common belief that children learn English better by beginning it very young is an illusion; the conditions for success are not and cannot be present, except in the very rare cases where English is regularly and well spoken in their own homes.

Fifty years have passed, and "English-medium" schools are no longer confined to the wealthy elite of the bigger cities. They are to be found in every obscure little market town. Many of them are mere business enterprises, making their profits out of simple people's belief that if their children "learn English" they will get a better job. These supposedly "superior" schools, for which so many pay fees and buy uniforms that they can ill afford, teach little except snobbery; the mother tongue is ignored in them, and the "English" they teach, often itself far from perfect, is never heard or used by the children outside the schoolroom. The children in effect are deprived of an essential tool of a worthwhile education, the mastery of a language. Nothing could be further from Gandhi's vision of an education for real swaraj.

Marjorie read of Gandhi's vision, with mounting excitement, in the articles which he published in *Harijan* in 1937. There he declared his faith in the vast potential of an education through active work, work related to basic human needs such as food and

clothing, work done with growing understanding of its scientific, social and cultural dimensions, work carried out together by a school-family of children and adults. Bentinck School was not guilty of neglect of the children's mother-tongue, and it had done its best to work as a happy, cooperative school-family; nevertheless, it operated within the framework of a Government system and concept of education which was alien from India's culture and was not meeting her real needs. Marjorie had begun to ask herself whether she could not make a contribution as a teacher in a more independent and more fully Indian setting. Gandhi's vision captured her imagination and fired her enthusiasm.

Other factors added to her uneasiness, especially the slow poisoning of human relationships by inter-communal suspicion and rivalry. After the failure of the hopes of unity in 1928, sectional interests of all kinds had found a platform at the Round Table Conferences, and their claim to "separate electorates" was strongly pressed. In spite of all that C.F. Andrews could do to put before ministers and officials in London the wisdom of the common electorate proposed in the "Nehru Report", the Government of India Act of 1935 provided for separate electorates for "religious minorities". "It means," Andrews wrote sadly, "a cat-and-dog fight between Hindus and Muslims for the next ten years..."* It also meant that emotionally loaded issues such as that of conversion from one religion to another acquired explosive dimensions; increased numbers meant increased political clout.

Many years later Marjorie was to meet a man who cherished a lifelong gratitude to Gandhi for his guidance in a conversion crisis in his own family. He and his brother had been little more than college boys when in 1934 their father publicly declared himself a Christian. The sons had a deep respect for their father, but many members of their Marathi Brahmin community abused and

---

* Private letter to Sir Samuel Hoare's P.A., India Office London 24.4.1935.

threatened the family, and they wrote to Gandhi for his advice. Gandhi responded at once, on one of his crisp postcards: "I congratulate you all on not in any way interfering with your father in doing what he thought was right. If you are sure that Hinduism gives you the peace you need, it is your duty to retain it, in spite of your father's change of faith." The family, thus encouraged, remained lovingly united, Hindus and Christian together. Opposition was silenced and slowly overcome.*

Although the new Provincial Government in Madras, led by Rajaji, took a strongly non-communal stand, and kept the worst communal passions in check, this atmosphere of distrust remained. Workers in any "communal" institution, however honest, were vulnerable to the suspicion that they were promoting the interests of their own community. Bentinck School was a Christian foundation, and its spiritual life was centred in Christian tradition. In itself, this was a very positive thing. Marjorie enjoyed teaching courses in which the courageous stand of the great Biblical prophets against public corruption and the oppression of the poor was related to India's aspirations for social justice and national integrity. Hindu, Muslim and Christian girls eagerly responded; they studied and worshipped together, and got to know and respect one another. The school would never have dreamed of pressing for "conversions"; it believed with Gandhi that "our prayer for others should be that God would give them, not the same light as he has given to us, but all the light *they* need for their own development".** Nevertheless, Marjorie found that her association with a "Christian" agency was liable to set up subtle barriers to freedom of intercourse with others. Like Gandhi she wanted to "claim her passport"; she wanted to be able to move freely, as a disciple of Jesus, among people of every religion. The time had come to move on. Where?

---

* Story told by Raghunath Narayan Harshe and reproduced with his permission, Gandhi's postcard is dated 16.5.1934.

** Speech to the Council of International Fellowships, January 1928.

The answer came through her association with the small but active group of Quakers in Madras. She had met them first through the International Fellowship and quickly felt at home among them. They tried to practise that "everyday religion" which had so attracted her at Cambridge. Then, on a visit to England, she had met Horace Alexander, a Quaker teacher whose interest in Gandhi had been aroused by a student from Germany, Fritz Berber, who talked of "an Indian who had followed his conscience in South Africa".*

In 1927-28 Horace had spent some time in India and visited Sabarmati. As Gandhi walked round the ashram with him, he apologised that there was no proper drain under the tap where people washed their hands after meals. "It is unhygienic," he said, "but at present we have no money to get it put right." "Surely that is an unimportant matter," said Horace. He never forgot Gandhi's emphatic reply: "No, you are wrong, it is not unimportant. All life is one, and for true religion all these details are important."** For him, as for the Quakers, true religion was an "everyday religion", a daily, hourly way of life.

There were other ways in which Quaker religious thought ran parallel to Gandhi's. The Quaker faith was rooted, as Gandhi's was, in a belief that human nature is open, at its deepest levels, to the divine spirit, and is therefore capable of rising above self-centredness. The Quakers spoke of this potential as a "Seed" of God; for them it followed that every human being, however seemingly evil, must be treated with respect. They therefore rejected violence, and Gandhi's *satyagraha*, with its appeal to the good in the opponent, was very congenial to them. They also respected Gandhi's faith in his "Inner Voice", for they too knew an "inward Light", and they believed that God may make himself known, irrespective of outward religious forms, "where the heart stands in

---

* Fritz Berber, (1898-1984), was to become an authority on international law, especially as it related to river waters. He later visited India in this connection.

** Narrated in a talk at Santiniketan, February 1948.

perfect sincerity".* Gandhi made many Quaker friends when he visited England for the Round Table Conference of 1931, and a number of Quakers worked with Andrews from then on for an honourable political settlement in India.

The Madras Quakers were part of this network of goodwill. In 1938 they received an English Quaker visitor, H.G. Wood, who had just spent a few days with Tagore at Santiniketan, where several Quakers had already worked. Tagore had talked with him about his desire to strengthen Santiniketan's links with English culture, and the result was that Wood brought to Madras a message and an invitation: an English Quaker teacher would be very welcome there.

Marjorie's questions had been answered, the next step was clear. Santiniketan, deeply rooted in the Indian soil, sturdily independent, had its windows open like Gandhi's to "the cultures of all lands". In December 1938 she travelled to Santiniketan to arrange for her future work — but not by the shortest route. She went via Wardha, so as to see for herself what was happening under Gandhi's guidance in the village school at Segaon. Segaon is the village five miles from Wardha in eastern Maharashtra where Gandhi had founded a new ashram in 1936. In 1940 the postal authorities requested Gandhi to give it another name, as it was being confused with another and bigger "Segaon" in the same State. Gandhi gave the name Sevagram (= "village of service") by which it is now officially known, although the old name persists in popular usage.

---

* The phrase was used by John Woolman, an American Quaker.

Chapter III
*Gandhi and Tagore: The Double Sadhana**

Marjorie's journey to Segaon and Santiniketan in December 1938 was one of great inward excitement and discovery. Within a few crowded days she came face to face with two of the greatest men then living, "Mahatma" Gandhi and "Gurudev" Rabindranath Tagore. Most of the external detail of that journey has faded from memory, but the essentials are indelible: many vivid mental pictures of the two central figures and their surroundings.

These pictures are full of children. Children skipped and danced around Gandhi on his evening walks; they clung to his hands and chuckled at his jokes. Gandhi himself was absorbed and relaxed; for that half-hour he gave himself up completely to his delight in the children. The adults, like adults everywhere, were inclined to think that the Master should attend to their "important" problems and questions first. Gandhi gently but firmly put them aside; this was the children's hour. He loved to have children for company; they helped him, he said, to keep his sense of humour and his sanity. "Without the children, and a sense of humour, I should have been dead long ago," he would say. That first evening Marjorie saw, what many before her had seen, a man who carried the bur-

---

* Sadhana connotes a spiritual discipline, an inwardly-directed striving to reach the Reality within and beyond appearances.

dens of the Indian people on his shoulders through a sixteen-hour working day, yet emerged at the end of it with all the zest and freshness of youth, apparently "without a care in the world". She remembered his famous reply to the journalist who asked him if he never took a vacation: "I am always on vacation." The roots of that ever-renewed youthfulness went deep; one of its fruits was the quality of spirit which enabled him to become so happily and humbly a child among children.

At that time Gandhi had been living in Segaon about two years. When he first arrived, he had found that the village well had no parapet. He had offered to help the people to build one provided that everyone, regardless of caste, should be free to use the well. The people refused to agree, so Gandhi arranged for a second well, with a parapet, to be dug in the Harijan quarters. Then in 1937 he had started a village school. This time there was no difficulty; caste children and Harijans worked and ate together.

Marjorie found the school-children bubbling over with life and happily busy. They kept the little mud-walled building and its surroundings scrupulously clean; they spun their yarn, singing old songs and learning new ones; as they did so they practised the writing and counting and calculations that went into keeping their daily diaries and the records of their work. Piles of freshly-picked cotton were drying in the sun. to be ginned and carded later.

"You see," the children explained, "we pick the ripe bolls in the early morning when the dew is still on them. That means we can pick them clean. When the sun has dried them the cotton leaves get very brittle, and broken leaf gets mixed in the cotton and spoils it. The big farmers don't mind, because they sell all their cotton to the mills; they pay their labourers by the weight of the picking, and so they want the cotton to be dry and light. But we use our cotton ourselves, and we want it clean." An example, Marjorie thought,

of the educational value of doing ordinary work, as Gandhi said, "scientifically".

The training of teachers for these new schools was then being carried out in Wardha. Methods and standards were impressive; creative imagination was at work. The teachers too talked of cotton picking. When the bolls are fully ripe, they said, a gentle touch is all that is needed, they come away easily. "If they don't, they are not yet ready for picking. We should wait another few days, we should not be impatient or greedy." That was education too, education in how to handle other living things, plants and animals, with respect for the natural cycle of their own lives — education in one aspect of non-violence.

In those days the road from Wardha to Segaon was little more than a cart track, dusty or muddy according to the season; visitors walked the five miles from the railway station or took a bullock or pony cart. The Pipal tree which now overshadows Gandhi's prayer-ground was still a slender sapling; he had planted it when the Ashram was established two years earlier. The simplicity of the buildings did not seem strange to Marjorie; there was a similar uncluttered bareness in the arrangements of the Bentinck School, and in the school-children's homes in Tamil Nad villages. But the order and cleanliness which Gandhi inspired endowed this simplicity with a special grace and beauty; Gandhi's own gaiety of spirit pervaded all the quiet purposeful busyness of the daily round.

This daily round seemed to Marjorie to include a disproportionate amount of spinning, valuable as spinning clearly was in the school programme. In her early days in India, Rajaji and others had soon convinced her that to use the homespun, handwoven cloth called *khadi* was a practical way to provide fuller employment in the villages, and so contribute to the relief of poverty and encourage the spirit of self-reliance. Khadi was the "uniform of *swaraj*" and the wearing of it did help to nurture a spirit of equality, com-

radeship and common endeavour. Marjorie habitually wore it, but she was not convinced that to spin regularly herself would be of any value, especially if one could not grow cotton or get weaving done locally. Segaon itself was in the heart of the cotton-growing region of Vidarbha, and the whole process of making cotton cloth was a natural activity there. But would it be so in Bengal?

Gandhi was very busy at the time. The young Crown Prince of Aundh, a small Indian State, had come to discuss how he and his father could introduce a democratic form of government; Education Department officials from Madras and politicians from Bengal also claimed attention. Yet Gandhi insisted on finding a little time for Marjorie also. She told him of her enthusiasm about the school, and also of her doubts and questionings. Gandhi answered with patient courtesy, and put his case for spinning as a personal discipline, as he must have put it to hundreds of visitors before. He did not fully convince her, and he did not press. He respected her doubts, for if people were unconvinced he preferred them to say so openly. The only thing he asked was that we should put our point of view with sincerity and humility. "If you think I am wrong," he would say, "you should try to convince me. I am open to reason."

A few days later, when Marjorie met Tagore at Santiniketan, she found him like Gandhi surrounded by children. Like Gandhi, he greatly enjoyed their company; the "eternal child" in the ageing poet responded to their interests and joys, and set them free to "do their own thing". He had never forgotten the tremendous exultation he had felt as a little boy when he first visited Santiniketan with his father, and was set free to roam where he pleased. He rejoiced to see other children enjoying the same freedom, roaming, climbing trees, endlessly active and alive. Whenever he could he would play with them, teach them songs, or coach them to put on a performance of one or other of his plays — usually, though not always, one that appealed to their sense of the ridiculous. Tagore was pleased that his new recruit was more interested in teaching

English to eleven-year-olds in this atmosphere of freedom and enjoyment than in giving "university" lectures, though in fact she did both.

Most of the children in the Santiniketan school came from Calcutta or other cities, but at Sriniketan two miles away the poet had established a village service centre where there was a separate school for local village boys. When Marjorie first arrived, these children were absorbed in questions of village health and sanitation, gathering information, learning how to give simple medicines, dress simple wounds or sores, and care for the sick. They were also making a study of the medicinal plants they could find in the locality, and how these were used. They had prepared home-made albums to record their discoveries; some of the albums would have made valuable village reference books. Here was life-education too, based on the natural and social environment of rural Bengal.

Sriniketan workers were in touch with many villages where the people were too poor to send their children to any school; children had to herd cattle or add what they could to the family income in some other way. The pressing need was better food, and Marjorie was soon involved, along with Sriniketan colleagues, in encouraging the village teachers to concentrate on this. The children cared for a few fruit and vegetable plants in the tiny courtyards of their own homes; sometimes the village elders would allow them to fence in a little patch of common ground near the village well and grow more vegetables there. Some of these were sold in the local market to buy slates and books and oil for a lamp, so that after the day's work was over the children could come together for an hour and learn to read and write. Such enterprises were fostering the spirit of self-help and independence in the same way as did Gandhi's.

Marjorie soon found in fact that to live and learn at Santiniketan drew her almost as closely into Gandhi's orbit as into Tagore's. There was much give and take between the two centres and a lot of

coming and going. Segaon and Santiniketan were much nearer to one another in essentials than was often supposed. Gandhi had entrusted the detailed working out and expansion of his educational ideas to Smt. Asha Devi and her husband E.W. Aryanayakam, who had been married at Santiniketan with Tagore's blessing. Aryanayakam himself had worked with Tagore at Santiniketan before he joined Gandhi. Asha Devi's parents, Professor and Mrs. Adhikari, had made Santiniketan their home; they were Marjorie's near neighbours and made her affectionately welcome, and she developed a great respect for Professor Adhikari's spiritual wisdom. The Aryanayakams themselves were frequent visitors to Santiniketan and kept Marjorie in touch with developments in "basic education" in Segaon and elsewhere.

Another link between Gandhi and Santiniketan was Gurdial Mallik, whom Marjorie like many others came to love and feel reverence far deeply. More than twentyfive years earlier, when Gurdial was a student in Bombay, C.F. Andrews had visited his college and drawn the young man into national service. Gurdial soon came to regard Tagore and Gandhi as his two *gurus*. His own daily life witnessed to the unity of spirit and purpose which he found in them. He lived in Santiniketan in a tiny mud-walled hut, which some of the students had built for him in the style of the Santal villages around. There he kept his few possessions: a change of clothing, a fountain-pen, notebook and paper. The hut, like Gandhi's at Segaon, was scrupulously clean and orderly; it was also touched by the spirit of Tagore, for the Santiniketan art students had painted attractive frescoes round its walls, and inscribed above them the verse Gurdial had chosen from Tagore's *Gitanjali*: "Let only that little be left of me by which I may name Thee my All."

Gurdial's own gay and radiant spirit attracted young and old, learned and simple alike. Like Gandhi he joked; like Tagore he sang, pouring his own deepest spiritual experience into the music. The little hut was the focus of much merriment, and also of much

thoughtful discussion with other Santiniketan workers, who would share their insights into the relationships between India's two great leaders, their convergence of spirit, their divergence of temperament and emphasis.

There was little debate about *khadi*, although that had been, and remained, a point of some difference. In Santiniketan *khadi* was not a "uniform" for all, as it was in Sevagram. Many did wear it habitually, many others did not. There was no pressure either way, but when Gandhi paid his visit in February 1940 almost everyone gathered to welcome him in white *khadi* clothes, many of which were bought especially for the occasion. The great majority, no doubt, wore them as a mark of respect, but to Marjorie, with Gandhi's invitation to the open expression of differing opinion still in her ears, it seemed like a "silent consent" to something with which many did not fully agree. Her reaction was to dig out and wear the only non-*khadi* garment she possessed, a Madras handloom sari whose brilliant colouring was conspicuous in the white-clad crowd. She had clearly much to learn about the "non-violence of spirit" which would refrain from judging the inner motives of other people!

There was a good deal of debate in Santiniketan about Gandhi's belief in the benefits of taking a vow. In his experience, a vow settled some questions of conduct, such as whether or not to eat meat or drink alcohol, and so left the individual free to turn his attention and energy into more important channels. Tagore reached a different conclusion. He felt that a vow could be an intrusion upon personal freedom, especially the freedom to change one's mind. Because of this, although he warmly encouraged many of the activities of scouting among the children, he disliked the Boy Scout "promise", and never linked up formally with the Boy Scout oganisation. It seemed to him that a vow could become too easily a substitute for thought rather than a freeing of thought. This may sometimes be a real danger. The honouring of a vow may, and

sometimes does, degenerate into a rigid outward observance oblivious of the claims of compassion and humanity. The classic protest against such rigidity is that of Jesus of Nazareth: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Gandhi felt, on the other hand, that the liberty of mind which was so dear to Tagore could become too easily a substitute for commitment instead of an enriching and enlivening of commitment — and this too is a real danger. Those who insist on their personal liberty may be tempted to withdraw from responsibility or to make compromises of the wrong kind. Jesus recognised this danger also. There is a story that he once saw a man working on the Sabbath day. "If you know what you are doing," he said, "you are indeed blessed; but if you do not know, you are merely a breaker of the law."

Gandhi insisted that this difference of emphasis did not mean conflict. The suggestion of "conflict" between him and Tagore seemed to him "a reflection on both Gurudev and myself. I started with a disposition to detect a conflict, but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none." The truth was as he said in 1925, that he and the poet "complemented each other's activities". His meaning is made clear by the imagery which he used. Tagore is Krishna the musician, "making his Gopis dance to the tune of his Flute". He himself is Rama the knight-errant, intent on rescuing Sita the *Charkha* (spinning wheel), and with her the desperate poor of India, from the ten-headed monster of commercial greed. Both Krishna and Rama, both the artist and the knight-errant, have a valid and valuable contribution to make to the welfare of humanity. It is not a question of "either... or", but of "both... and", as Andrews, close friend of them both, knew very well. Andrews' own nature held elements of both Krishna and Rama, so that he understood and shared both the artist's immersion in beauty and the knight-errant's passionate devotion to the needy.

This distinction between Gandhi and Tagore is not absolute, it is a matter of degree. It is very clear that there was a strong element of "Rama", the knight-errant, in Tagore. He thought of God as Gandhi did, as Daridra Narayan, the Lord who dwells with the poor. Countless poems bear witness to this experience.

> He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground,
> and where the path-maker is breaking stones.
> He is with them in sun and in shower,
> and his garment is covered with dust.

Tagore could not have become Gandhi's trusted, candid friend if he had never known the longing to identify himself with the downtrodden and oppressed, and "come down on the dusty soil" alongside them. It is true that he did not succeed, and he knew it; but he could and did throw himself into his own "constructive programme", both in the villages around Shileidah and later on when he founded Sriniketan. For him, a true "*Viswa-Bharati*" must be responsive not only to "the culture of all lands" but also to the needs and aspirations of its own village neighbours.

There was also an element of the "Krishna" in Gandhi. He rejoiced as Tagore did in "the sky above with all its shining stars",[1] in the cool pure air of dawn, in all natural beauty. He shared Tagore's experience that: "Sweet is the world, sweet the dust of it. Truth's loveliness has taken form in earth's dust."[2] Both men felt a reverent love for the living earth with its animals, trees and plants, its very stones. "How deeply it pains me," Gandhi would say, "that people should pluck masses of delicate blossom to fling in my face or hang round my neck! We should feel a more living bond between ourselves and the rest of the animate creation." (His practical remedy was to insist that "garlands" should be made of homespun yarn!). He protested when a friend brought in a handful of babul leaves, after dark, to clean his carding bow. "Look! all these leaves are folded up, asleep," he said. "Trees need sleep as we do. It's a wretched thing to tear leaves off a tree when it is resting."[3]

It seems, however, that Gandhi was less sensitive than either Tagore or Andrews to the beauty created and expressed through human minds and hands and voices. Andrews loved painting and poetry; when he left school there had been a serious proposal that he should go on to Art School rather than University, and from time to time, in later years, he expressed himself in painting and in verse. Gandhi had little feeling for this aspect of human endeavour. There is a story that Andrews rushed into Gandhi's room in Sevagram, on his way to England in December 1936, and insisted that Gandhi should drop everything and read, there and then in Andrews' presence, Tagore's wonderful Lyrical drama The *Cycle of Spring*.[4] Its paeans of unconquerable youth had inspired Andrews for twenty years, to Gandhi they had been a closed book — and it is doubtful how much they meant to him when, to please Andrews, he opened the book!

Tagore's former students used to love to recall his memorable lectures on the English poet Shelley. His comments on Shelley's poems were made in Bengali, but the poems under discussion were always read in Shelley's English original. Tagore knew that a great poem is born "out of the depth of Truth" as a living whole, clothed in the flesh of the poet's native speech. A great poem is essentially untranslatable; its words *are* its message. Translations may offer a paraphrase, they can reproduce the intellectual content, but they can never fully capture that living whole. This is something that Gandhi did not understand. "Why need I learn English," he asked, "to get the best of what Shakespeare and Milton thought and wrote?"[5]

This divergence of temperament between Gandhi and Tagore was reinforced by the differences in their family background and tradition. The Tagore family had a strong tradition of personal liberty, personal decision and enterprise; from boyhood Rabindranath had rebelled against rules, against schools, against accepted social norms. Gandhi's family tradition was one of sober social responsi-

bility, of the administration of a State, of respect for commonly accepted law. A lawyer himself, Gandhi understood the truth behind the saying that "hard cases make bad law" in a way that Tagore perhaps did not. Both men were concerned to act as responsible citizens to promote the freedom of India; both were pioneers and pathfinders, but the "inarticulate major premise"* in each man's mind was shaped differently by this difference of tradition. Tagore's unspoken concern was to guard the integrity of personal action. Gandhi turned his mind to the administrative question of how any particular programme might be carried out with equal integrity at State level and with a country-wide impact.

The difference is seen in one of the major interests of both men, education. When Gandhi, after many years of personal experiment, first set his plan for education before the public, it was as "basic *national* education" to be organised and backed by an Indian *national* government. Tagore never attempted to organise his creative educational ideas, and he was clear that no government *ought* to exercise control over the education of its people. For him, the core of education was in personal relationships, and he kept his own school independent of government interference. But once again the difference between the two men is not absolute. Gandhi valued, as fully as did Tagore, "the personal initiative and responsibility which is at the root of all progress". One of his most revealing sayings is that "the test of non-violence is organisation"; he had no use for a centralised hierarchy of power, and envisaged his ideal political structure as one of "ever-widening, never-ascending circles" of cooperation. For him, as for Tagore, these ever-widening circles must expand to embrace the whole of humanity.

To sum up, the difference was one of emphasis. Tagore acted with vigour as an individual, as Gandhi did; he commended his ideas tirelessly, as Gandhi did, to all he could reach by speech or

---

* This phrase is quoted by M.C. Chagla from the great American Judge Justice Holmes. Roses in December p. 130.

writing, but unlike Gandhi he made no attempt to implement them through large-scale organisation. He was first and foremost an artist. His integrity inspired other artists. Santiniketan has been rich in them, but in general they are apt to be uneasy members of an organised team. Some of our most creative debates, in later years at Sevagram, were about finding the right relationships between the freedom of the creative artist to follow his/her own vision, and the claims of the community to the responsible service of *all* its members. There has been an equally uneasy relationship between the tradition of individual freedom and integrity at Santiniketan and the subjection of the growing institution, since its founder's death, to government control and regulation.

It is not surprising that in Santiniketan and Sevagram these debates, concerned as they were with such fundamentals, never reached finality. It is good that they did not; such questions are part of the eternal paradox of truth. Yet beneath this paradox of the "double *sadhana*" there is also a deep unity, and it is to this that we must now turn.

Both Gandhi and Tagore had faith in human nature, in the potential of ordinary humanity, and so approached their work in the spirit of the wise and beautiful Chinese adage:

> Go to the people, learn from them, love them,
> Start from what they know, build on what they have.
> But of the best workers,
> When their task is accomplished, their work is done,
> The people will all remark: "We did it ourselves."

They believed that the people could, and would, do it themselves once they had caught the vision. And in spite of what has been said above about Gandhi's interest in country-wide organisation, he declared, as Tagore had done, that he would be content to know that his life's work had brought some health of body and spirit, some glimpse of a better life, some unity of purpose, to one village, one obscure corner of India. "A District is too big a bite for

me," said Gandhi in reply to the enthusiasts who in 1945 wanted to launch an experiment in lifelong *Nai Talim** throughout the Wardha District. "If I can organise the work successfully in one village I shall be satisfied." The words echo almost to the letter what Tagore had said many years earlier of his own work for village *swaraj* in Bengal.

This, however, is comparatively superficial. Both Gandhi and Tagore regarded outward achievement of this or any other kind as ultimately insignificant unless it was a step towards another achievement, the realisation of an inner freedom, both for the individual and for society, without which the external freedom is nothing but *maya* (illusion). They knew that no relative or temporal good, not even the noblest struggle for justice and righteousness, can by itself fully satisfy the human spirit. Truth lay beyond these. They sought Truth as a spiritual Reality, a Presence and Power, an all-pervasive, mysteriously Other, which was yet to be known in the profoundest depths of the self. They sought awareness of that real Self, beyond and within all smaller selves. That was the ultimate meaning of their *sadhana*, and both were humble enough to acknowledge that they had not fully realised it. "I have not yet found Him," said Gandhi. "The song that I came to sing remains unsung," wrote Tagore.

It is, therefore, no accident that both Gandhi and Tagore turned again and again to the wonderful opening verse of the *Isopanishad*, which Gandhi translated as follows:

> This whole world is the garment of the Lord.
> Renounce it then, and enjoy it,
> receiving it back as the gift of God.

Enjoyment and renunciation, says the sage, are complementary opposites, like light and darkness. Far from being incompatible,

---

* *Nai Talim* "new education", the phrase used to describe Gandhi's educational principles, as distinct from the school programme of "basic national education".

each enriches and gives meaning to the other. There is a story that a western journalist once asked Gandhi: "What is the secret of your life? — in five words?" Gandhi rose to the challenge with delight. "I can give it to you in three," he replied. "*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*: — renounce and enjoy."

Gandhi, like Tagore, was endowed with great powers of enjoyment. He once remarked to Verrier Elwin that he found none of his "eleven vows" more difficult than as*wada* — control of the palate.[6] He appreciated good food, and the food in his ashrams, while extremely simple, was well cooked. He and Tagore both knew also that the human spirit is truly free only when enjoyment and renunciation go hand in hand; they knew the detachment that does not covet, that "kisses the joy as it flies". The words are William Blake's:

> He that grasps to himself a joy
> Doth the winged life destroy.
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

The greed that grasps and destroys was condemned as strongly by Tagore as by Gandhi. "Mother Earth," he once wrote, "has enough for the healthy appetites of her children, and something extra for rare cases of abnormality. But she has not nearly enough for the sudden growth of a whole world of spoilt and pampered children."[7] He loved to tell how his own greed had once been rebuked by peasant wisdom. As a young man, he had been passionately gathering fragrant blossoms from their parent tree. "Why do you snatch them?" asked an old village woman. "Has not God given us the fallen flowers for our worship?"

Gandhi and Tagore however sought this detachment by different paths. Gandhi declared roundly that to keep for himself more than the barest necessities, in face of such desperate human need as existed around him, would make him "no better than a thief".

"In his self-discipline," wrote a friend, "there was an element of the ascetic; he burned up his senses in the fire of his spirit."[8] Tagore believed that the senses should be mastered, but not denied; for him they were among the "barest necessities" of life; "they were the instruments of his *sadhana*, and he cherished them as a musician cherishes his instruments."[8]

There was one important aspect of this detachment, however, in which the two friends entirely agreed. Renunciation for them did not mean a retreat to the "peace" of a Himalayan cave; it did not mean turning one's back on the joys and sorrows, struggles and fears, of human society. It meant a detached and clear-sighted *involvement* in human affairs. One of Tagore's earliest plays, *The Sannyasi*, written at the age of twenty-two, is devoted to this theme. When the play opens the *sannyasi* regards the world as a "kingdom of lies", something to be despised and ignored. As he sits by the roadside with his alms bowl, an outcaste destitute child comes up to him. Because he is indifferent to such mundane things as caste he does not reject her; he allows her to sit by his side. She responds with an innocent trust and affection which, through struggle and tragedy, finally reveals to him a new freedom, a freedom to be found "among things and forms and purposes", in a world where the finite is the vehicle of the infinite, and love is the pathway to Truth.

So with Gandhi, for whom "non-violence is the final flower of truth" and is also the soil out of which grows "the rare herb of love, that makes a friend even out of a sworn enemy". If love is to be the pathway to Truth, it must know no boundaries, no limits. "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face," wrote Gandhi, "one must be able to love the meanest creature as oneself. Whoever aspires after that cannot keep out of any field of life... those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

What religion means was set forth clearly enough for Gandhi both in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Quran Sharif*:

> He who is the friend of all beings,
> He who is intent on the welfare of all in act and thought and speech,
> He only knows true religion.
>
> (*Mahabharata: Shanti Parva*)

> No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself... Do you love your creator? Love your fellow-men.
>
> (*Quran Sharif*)

Gandhi found "through bitter experience" that if he wanted to be the friend of all beings, and express his love to his fellow-men, he "could not possibly leave politics alone".[9]

Tagore was fully involved in human affairs, as we have seen, but he did not often plunge into the hurly-burly of an immediate political struggle. There was one memorable exception, when he joined the great upsurge of protest against Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905. His own imaginative genius added poetry to the campaign; he chose the *raksha-bandhan* ceremony* as the symbol of Bengali unity, and marched through the streets of Calcutta at the head of a huge procession, singing his own song of defiance:

> Think you to sever these ties of Fate
> and break us apart, in your pride?
> Strong you may be, and haughty,
> but so much strength you have not!
> For even in the weak is power
> and God shall overrule.[10]

A whole series of magnificent national songs, written at that time, have long outlived the occasion which called them forth. But the poet himself realised very quickly that political activism was not his real field of service. He withdrew, recording in another lovely poem his conviction of where his own calling lay: "Forgive me brothers, I bid you farewell."[11]

---

* *Raksha-bandhan*: a ceremony in which sisters tie coloured threads round the wrists of their brothers as a symbol of faithful mutual support.

For Gandhi, however, both in South Africa and India, involvement in the hurly-burly was almost continuous; political affairs were a normal part of his daily business. He recognised "the hideous immorality and untruth" which pervaded ordinary political life. "The stench that comes from that life," he commented, "has appeared to some to be so suffocating that they have come to the conclusion that politics were not for a god-fearing man. Had that been really so, I feel it would have been a disaster for mankind." The historian A.J. Toynbee, in a tribute to Gandhi, takes up this point: "The task of redeeming politics is more urgent than ever before. There is a need for saints to plunge into the mire at their spiritual peril. Gandhi did plunge in, up to the neck, and came through spiritually unscathed. His secret was that... in his innermost self he remained aloof from politics, even when his outer self was most actively engaged in them".[12]

This is perhaps the best place to deal with a matter of vocabulary which seems to be a stumbling-block for some people today in the approach to Gandhi's thought. We have just been quoting Gandhi's own words about "religion" and "politics". These words gave rise to no difficulty when the authors of this book were students. We have described in the Introduction how teachers in Cambridge insisted, as Gandhi insisted, that religion must be concerned with politics. Nowadays, however, both these words have become suspect. They have been given a narrow and nasty connotation; "religion" has been equated with sectarian arrogance and prejudice, "politics" with a selfish struggle for party and personal power. Even Vinoba Bhave, who was so closely associated with Gandhi, appears to have endorsed these interpretations; his well-known saying that "religion and politics" should be replaced by "spirituality and science" leads some people to reject Gandhi's words without further thought.

To us it seems that the careful, accurate use of language is part of the discipline of truth. Vinoba himself rightly insisted that a

mastery of one's mother tongue, both as a vehicle of creative thought and as tool of precise scientific description and reasoning, is the foundation of all genuine education. We should show the same careful respect for other languages as for our own, otherwise we are less than fully truthful, less than just.

Gandhi himself used the English words religion and politics in accordance with their precise meaning. "Religion" denotes "that which binds together"; for Gandhi, it is a unifying force, as Chagla in the tribute to Gandhi rightly emphasised. A religious man, as *Mahabharata* and *Quran* alike insist, is one who is a friend of *all*. Religion is, therefore, the very opposite of "sectarianism"; a "sect" means something "cut off" from the whole. To equate religion with sectarianism shows a disrespect for the real meaning of the word which makes for confusion of thought. "Spirituality" is an unsatisfactory substitute, of uncertain meaning. The word politics, like the word religion, has a positive meaning; it is derived from the Greek word *polis*, a city; politics is the art of managing the affairs of a city, that is to say, of a comparatively large human community. If the word has become polluted by the power struggle. as it clearly has, it must be "redeemed", but it cannot in any realistic way be replaced by "science" which connotes a discipline of a quite different nature.

We shall, therefore, in this book, stick to the words which Gandhi used, and hope that readers will understand them in their real meaning, the meaning Gandhi intended them to have.

Chapter IV
Dark Days 1939-42

When war was declared in Europe in September 1939 dark clouds had been gathering for some time on the Indian horizon. The "separate electorates" embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 resulted in increasing political conflict between the major religious communities. After the elections held under the new Act in 1937 the situation deteriorated rapidly. The Indian National Congress maintained its secular principle, but in actual composition its membership was overwhelmingly Hindu, and it was easy for hostile propaganda to label it a "Hindu" party. The Congress ministries which took office in many of the Provinces did not seek the cooperation of the Muslim League in the tasks of government, and the Muslim ministers whom they did appoint were mocked and abused as "Hindu stooges" and traitors to their own community. There were failures and mistakes on both sides, which were magnified by unscrupulous propaganda; the result was widespread communal rioting which provincial governments were constrained to put down by police action — in other words by methods which in Gandhi's eyes showed up the weakness of a "nonviolence" which was merely a political expedient, not a living faith.

In the midst of the mutual recriminations between Muslims and Hindus, Gandhi strove to remind both communities of the pos-

sibility of better things. He described how, in his own childhood, "the Hindus and Muslims of Rajkot used to mix together and participate in one another's domestic functions and ceremonies. I believe those days will dawn again... I have full faith that true and lasting heart-unity between Hindus and Musalmans, not merely a patched-up political compromise, will come sooner or later. I know that without it there can be no *swaraj*."[1]

Those words were spoken at Abbottabad in the North West Frontier Province. It was Gandhi's second visit to the area. He had spent about two months there in the autumn of 1938, specially to meet Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars. The Khudai Khidmatgars ("true servants of God") had been organised by Abdul Ghaffar Khan in 1929-30 and by 1938 had over 100,000 members. Their purpose was to serve God through service of humanity. They wore a "red shirt" uniform, drilled in military fashion, and had strenuous physical training, but they carried no weapons and were pledged to non-violence in thought, word and deed. Badshah Khan, as he was affectionately called among his Pathan people, was a devout and loyal Muslim who never missed a *namaz* or a fast; but Islam for him meant *amal*, *yakeen*, *muhabbat* (work, faith, love), and he deplored the communal tension which prevailed in so many places. "At the back of our quarrels," he said, "is the failure to recognize that all faiths contain enough inspiration for their adherents. The Holy Quran says in so many words that God sends messengers for all peoples, and these messengers are their prophets... Details differ, because each faith takes the flavour of the soil from which it springs."[2]

In 1938-39 Gandhi's mind often went back to what seemed to him a parallel situation in 1930-31. During the last stages of the non-cooperation movement of those years, "volunteers" had been recruited who did not conform to the strict discipline of non-violence, on the plea that otherwise there would be no recruits at all. But when disorder broke out, and there was murderous rioting at

Ahmedabad, Kanpur and elsewhere, these "volunteers" had been powerless to quell it.[3]

Nevertheless there had been shining exceptions to this general failure. In Ahmedabad and Kanpur there had been some true *satyagrahis* — young Hindus and Muslims — who had died together in an attempt to stop the slaughter. Gandhi now suggested that those who were prepared to risk their lives in the same way, to heal the communal frenzy in the name of our common humanity, should form a *Shanti Sena*, a non-violent "Peace Army". "Army?" he was asked. "Yes, army," Gandhi replied. He whole-heartedly admired the military virtues. He had himself lived under military discipline in South Africa; he knew the importance, in a crisis, of the regular training and implicit obedience of the soldier; he knew the power of a military comradeship which put loyalty to a common cause above all smaller personal considerations. He insisted that a Peace Army should have standards of discipline and training at least as high as those of the armed forces; it should draw its recruits, as they did, from any and all of the various religious communities and inspire them to transcend their differences in a common loyalty to a great cause.

There, however, the parallel to the conventional army ends. The sanctions of a non-violent army are moral courage and steady, impartial goodwill. Physical strength is not important, and the Shanti Sena, therefore, recruits women equally with men; in fact, as Gandhi pointed out, women may well prove to be *better* soldiers of non-violence than men. Training in non-violence "is diametrically opposed to training in violence... In the training for violence one must learn the art of killing. In the training for non-violence one must learn the art of dying... He who has not overcome all fear cannot practise *ahimsa* to perfection."[4] Gandhi's message to the Khudai Khidmatgars was that if they felt s*tronger* as a result of discarding their traditional weapons, well and good. If they felt weaker and more helpless, they should take up their weapons again.

It would be a tragedy if instead of learning the true *power* of non-violence, the brave Pathan were to become a coward.

The Shanti Sena did not then take organised form. Events in 1939-40 moved too swiftly. But the idea remained, and remains, alive.

When war broke out, as we have seen, the sympathies of India were strongly with Britain, even though there was much criticism of the Viceroy for declaring India to be at war without consulting any of her national leaders. Gandhi, who held that "a non-violent person is bound, when occasion arises, to say which side is just", declared that in his view "Herr Hitler is responsible for the war. His claim may be a just one, (but) he will not let the claim be examined by an impartial tribunal." The Congress Working Committee adopted a dignified resolution: "The Indian people do not look forward to the victory of one people over another, but to a victory of real democracy for all peoples, and to the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world." They asked to be assured by the British government that democratic freedom for India and other colonial peoples would be the immediate outcome of a war fought to save democracy. When they did not receive any clear response they directed the provincial Congress ministries to resign, saying that they could not cooperate in a struggle for a "democracy" in which India was not included. A great opportunity was missed. Wiser statesmanship, and more generosity of spirit on the part of all concerned, might have perhaps enabled the Congress and the Muslim League to join hands in an Indian Government of national emergency. But it was not to be. Rightly or wrongly, there had been much criticism of some Congress ministries for administrative discrimination against Muslims, and the Muslim League now called on Muslims to celebrate their resignation as a "Day of Deliverance". Six months later, meeting at Lahore in March 1940, the League declared "Pakistan" to be its goal.

The idea that Muslims were a separate "nation" was not new. Some of the British administrators of the latter part of the nineteenth century had emphasized their distinctiveness of racial origin and culture — something only partially true. The Aga Khan in 1908 had called them "a nation within the nation"[5] and the feeling of separateness was strengthened for some by the Khilafat agitation of 1919-20, which appealed to an extra-territorial political loyalty to Pan-Islam.

It is said that at the time of the first Round Table Conference in 1930 the poet Sir Mahomed Iqbal had held forth in a London restaurant, advocating the creation of a Muslim State of Pakistan. When Jinnah heard about it, he had ridiculed the idea. "Iqbal isn't a politician, he's a poet," he had laughed.[6] For him at that time India was one national unit. But from 1937 onwards the political atmosphere favoured communal aims. V.D. Savarkar, in his Presidential Address to the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, spoke of "the two nations, the Hindu and the Muslim", and urged that India should become a Hindu state, in which Muslims and other religious minorities would in effect be second-class citizens. From that time the idea of Pakistan began to figure as a serious alternative in discussions of the future.

Gandhi's response to the Lahore resolution was given in two passionate articles in *Harijan* in April 1940. "The two-nation theory is an untruth. A Bengali Muslim speaks the same tongue as a Bengali Hindu, eats the same food, has the same amusements. They dress alike... Those whom God has made one, man will never be able to divide... My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines. To assent to such a doctrine is for me a denial of God. I believe with my whole soul that we are all children of the same God. But I cannot thrust my belief down the throats of the Muslims who think they are a different nation."

A few days later the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Ramgarh in Bihar. The highlight of the meeting was the Presidential Address of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, one of the most distinguished of the group of Muslim leaders who stood by the principle of the secular state. Speaking with deep feeling and in simple forceful Hindustani, he gave his answer as a Muslim to those who claimed separate nationhood for the Muslims of India:

> I am a Mussalman and proud of it. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilisation, are my wealth and my fortune. I cannot tolerate any interference with them. But I have other sentiments also. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments, it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality...
>
> Islam has as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism. Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements. Our languages, literature, art, dress, customs bear the stamp of our joint endeavour. We have become an Indian nation. No artificial scheming to separate and divide can break this unity.[7]

The Maulana's deep seriousness communicated itself to his audience. Marjorie was there, along with a small group from Santiniketan. After more than forty years she still remembers vividly the impact of the speech.

What went wrong? Why was that "indivisible unity" shattered? Why were those whom "God has made one" divided? Does part of the answer lie in the ambiguity of the idea of a nation?

Like "religion" and "politics", the word "nation" needs to be defined carefully if we are not to argue at cross purposes. At root,

like "native", it has to do with the place where one is born. This is the most widespread and natural use of the word. The very fact of living from birth in the same geographical area, dependent on the same natural resources, generates a shared experience, a common way of life, very often a common language, and frequently though not always a common political structure.

The sub-continent of India is a clearly demarcated geographical area, and it is this of which Maulana Azad was thinking when he spoke of how Indian nationality had been shaped over many centuries by the shared experience of all those whose lives were spent on Indian soil. This is a very large area, however, and within its boundaries are sub-regions which differ widely from one another, from the inhospitable arid deserts of Rajasthan to the riverine plains of Bengal or the mountains which "break down to the sea" along the coast of Kerala. All over India the ancient regional names bear witness to the people's awareness of this diversity. The people of each region are in a real sense "nations within the nation", and the smaller, regional "nation" is often more real to them than the larger. It was to this fact of common Bengali "nationhood" based on a particular geographical region, that Gandhi appealed in the article we have quoted from *Harijan*, just as Tagore had appealed to it in the *raksha-bandhan* movement of 1905.

Gandhi made it very clear, however, that loyalty to one's native land should never become an uncritical, selfish, exclusive thing. "For me," he wrote, "patriotism is the same as humanity"... "My *swadeshi* teaches me that India has a prior claim on my service, but my patriotism is not exclusive. I live for India's freedom because it is part of truth. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England. I want the freedom of my country so that the resources of my country might be used for the benefit of mankind. A country has to be free in order that if need be it may die so that the human race may live. Let that be our nationalism... World peace can be firmly assured only when nations learn

to share goods, services and knowledge with other nations, and limit their own consumption for the sake of other nations."[8] As Gandhi had told Jehangir with such emphasis during their first meeting: "I am born an Indian; I try to be a good Indian in order that I may be a good member of the human race."

There is, therefore, no place in Gandhi's thought for the narrow "nationalism" which declares: "My country, right or wrong" — though he would probably have enjoyed the witty comment which appeared recently in an Indian newspaper: "My country right or wrong — yes! When right, to be *kept* right; when wrong, to be *put* right!"[9]

No one has expounded the dangers of national exclusiveness more eloquently than Tagore, in the three lectures on *Nationalism* which he delivered during the first world war in Japan, U.S.A. and England. He begins, in each lecture, by making clear what he means by a "nation". For him, what we have called "a nation" above, namely a people whose bond of unity is in the land of their birth, is not a nation at all, it is a *society*. A society is an end in itself; it is the self-expression of the social nature of humanity, it is a living organism whose many constituents interact in harmony. In Tagore's vocabulary India is a "no-Nation"; she is a great and varied society, which over the centuries has absorbed many diverse elements. India's historical task, as he sees it, is to evolve a pattern of living which will enable all these elements to grow in harmony into their own full human maturity. She often failed, but because this has been her goal, her relationship with other Asian societies has also been natural, easy and harmonious.

A *nation*, in Tagore's vocabulary, only comes into being when a society is organised to pursue its own exclusive self-interest. A Nation, for him, is a society that seeks *power*, because it is driven by greed, and so by fear of other rival nations. By demanding the final loyalty of all its citizens, and their unquestioning obedience,

this Nation inevitably diminishes their humanity; the full human being is replaced by the human automaton trained to become a more efficient cog in the power-machine of the Nation. If *swaraj* is thought of in terms of this power-machine, it is *maya*. Such a *swaraj* "is not our objective. Our fight is a spiritual fight to emancipate man from these organisations of national egoism. And *then* Man will find his *swaraj*, freedom for all humanity."[10]

Tagore, in fact, uses the word nation to mean what we commonly mean by the nation-state, and in spirit Gandhi was wholly with him. Gandhi looked upon the increase of *state* power with the greatest fear, he wrote, "because it destroys the personal initiative and responsibility which are at the root of all progress".

It was in this ambiguity of the idea of a nation that the untruth and danger of the "two-nation" theory lay. The Muslim people of India were, and still are, part and parcel of the various regional "nations" which make India their home. With their distinctive cultural and religious traditions we may even regard them as "a nation within the nation", an element in that enriching diversity in unity which India seeks to preserve — provided that we also recognize that the ancient Christian community of Kerala, or the Sikhs, or India's many a*divasi* peoples, have an equal right to be thought of as "nations within the nation". The danger lies not in the recognition of cultural or regional sub-nations, but in the demand for a nation-*state*, for the creation of rival centres of self-interested power.

Nationalism is still a live issue in India today. Voices are being raised among us declaring that Gandhi was an "enemy" of the Muslims and Harijans of India because he did-not wish to see these "cultural sub-nations" set up exclusive "organisations of national egoism"; he wanted them to make their contribution as valued and respected elements in India's cultural diversity. If such groups are now tempted to organise for self-interest because they do *not* feel valued or even secure the fault lies with us, the people of India as a

whole, who have failed to ensure that equality of social status and economic opportunity which Gandhi's constructive programme was intended to promote.

We should, therefore, ask what India means by claiming Gandhi as "father of the *nation*"? If we mean, as we usually appear to mean, that India owes to him her existence as an independent national political unit, are we prepared also to accept his principles of national political action? Do we believe, as he did, that the nation's service to humanity, like the individual's, consists in serving its neighbours? Do we believe, as he did, that "our first care should be to serve those of our neighbours who, while physically near, are mentally distinct from us"?[11] How would the record of India's dealings with Pakistan and Sri Lanka measure up to that standard? Why do our smaller neighbours sometimes feel afraid of us?

We talk much of "national integration", and most of us take it for granted that national integration is a good thing. So it is, if it is the expression of what Gandhi called "heart-unity". But that heart unity can only be achieved when people are free to be themselves in all their human diversity. If in the name of unity, the nation-state imposes *uniformity*, what then? If distinctive and valuable local traditions of autonomy, of social cooperation and justice are ignored, eroded, or rejected, and local cultural identity is threatened, alienation and resentment take the place of "heart-unity". If in the name of "security" and "stability" the nation-state undermines the civil rights of its people and the freedom of its press, what then? If "national integration" is valued chiefly as a contribution to making the nation-state a more efficient power-machine, the time may not be far off when "the nation" may have to die "in order that the human race may live".

The challenge of Pakistan, serious though it was, was not the most immediate of the issues which faced Gandhi in the spring of 1940. By 1939 it had become clear that there were powerful ele-

ments in the Congress itself who did not share his faith in non-violence. In a stormy Congress session in 1939 Subhash Chandra Bose urged that the time had come for an ultimatum to the British Government. If India's freedom were any longer delayed, he declared, there should be a massive, sustained campaign of civil disobedience.

Subhash was the idol of Calcutta youth. His passionate, selfless patriotism, his personal charm, his qualities of leadership, had a very powerful appeal, and many followed him. Gandhi, however, refused to endorse any such campaign because, in his opinion, the moral fibre of Congress had been so weakened by the temptations of power that it was unfit to lead a large-scale non-violent struggle; mass civil disobedience in the prevailing conditions would inevitably result in violence. "I would not gain independence," he wrote, "at the cost of non-violence."

Subhash thought that Gandhi's attitude savoured of compromise — to him a dishonourable thing. In Gandhi's view, compromise might be honourable. "The very insistence on truth," he wrote, "has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise. I saw in later life that this spirit was an essential part of satyagraha."[12] He had made it clear at his trial in 1922 that this compromise could never mean compromise with evil, but it could and did mean a willingness to adjust to circumstances in such matters as the *timing* of a mass struggle for freedom. For Gandhi, non-violence was the core of the matter; for Subhash it was not. A parting of the ways was inevitable.

The result was that the Ramgarh session of the Congress was confronted by a rival "anti-compromise" meeting. Many of us who had gone to attend the Congress session watched the defiant procession which carried Subhash shoulder-high to preside at the other camp. The air was electric with tension; rumours of possible violence and arson flew thick and fast. But what actually

happened was a heavy downpour of rain which drenched both camps alike!

The Congress Working Committee itself had been unable to endorse Gandhi's view that the struggle for freedom should be non-violent in all circumstances. At the beginning of the war, it had declared that if India were invaded by enemy forces it would prepare the country for armed resistance. "This is tragic," wrote Gandhi. "If India ever prepared herself that way she would constitute the greatest menace to world peace. The fact, however, is that our fight has not been one of non-violent resistance of the strong. It has been the passive resistance of the weak."

The immediate question at the Ramgarh Congress, therefore, was whether and how "the non-violence of the strong" could be brought to bear on the international situation, and particularly on the relationships between India and Britain. Marjorie was one of a handful of English people who were present at the gathering. It was moving evidence of the pervasive influence of Gandhi that we should be treated there as equals, given a natural unforced welcome, and be allowed to share, as fellow-learners in the school of non-violence, in the discussions that went on. But the discussions were inconclusive; no clear leading then emerged.

During the weeks that followed, the Nazi armies inflicted a series of disasters on the allies in Europe, and occupied one country after another. Gandhi continued to think about what "the non-violence of the brave" required in that context. It was clearly wrong, he thought, to take advantage of Britain's difficulties, standing alone against Hitler as she did that summer. Subhash Bose took an opposite view; for him, Britain's difficulty was India's opportunity. He courted arrest in Calcutta, and then a few months later made his dramatic escape from India, going first to Germany and then to Japan, and associating himself with Britain's enemies.

In contrast, Gandhi declared that he had been wrong when he placed civil disobedience before constructive work. "I feared I should estrange my co-workers," he confessed, "and so I carried on with imperfect *ahimsa*... We have now to show faith in the non-violence of the brave. That does not mean going to jail. It means faith in the potency of constructive work to bring about *swaraj*, constructive work being the vital part of the programme of *ahimsa*."[13]

Gandhi, therefore, decided that India's claim to *swaraj* should be kept before the public eye by symbolic actions, such as the raising of the national flag, which could not in any way hinder Britain in her military struggle. He also decided that these symbolic actions should be carried out by men and women who had proved their devotion to that "vital part" of non-violence, the constructive programme. The first to be chosen was Vinoba Bhave, a previously obscure worker whose name thus became widely known for the first time.

Gandhi himself wrote many articles during this period in order to explain *why* he regarded the constructive programme as so vital. Programmes of civil disobedience, he said, were aimed at the Government; they were designed to influence the British rulers. However disciplined and non-violent they might be, however "successful", they touched only the superstructure of power. But the constructive programme was aimed at the roots of power; it was designed to replace servility by self-respect, the helplessness of ignorance by the confidence of knowledge. It was in effect a "building from below", it could invigorate every cell in the body politic of India, by enabling ordinary people to discover their own self-respect and their own potential power. This, Gandhi declared, is the only way to make *swaraj* a reality in the life of every village. As he had written twenty years earlier in *Young India*, India will be fully independent only when the people

realise that they are the masters, that they can solve their own problems and shape their own future.

Swaraj, he went on, also depends on self-control, on a self-imposed moral restraint. Without that, liberty becomes license, and speedily destroys itself. True *swaraj*, Gandhi insisted, means learning to think and act, at every level, for the good of the whole; the whole village, not merely one's own family or community; the whole country, not just one's own region or linguistic group. This learning cannot be had from books, it can come only by experience. Grass-roots democracy, grass-roots *swaraj*, is to be learned only by practice. "Hard experience," Gandhi wrote, "is the most efficient teacher in democracy." People learn "by making mistakes and rectifying them". Gandhi believed in their capacity to learn; he had faith in their inborn good sense and reasonableness. Therefore, he had faith that a self-reliant cooperative democracy at the grass roots, based on jointly planned cooperative work to supply the village's needs, would generate the capacity to resist misuse of political power in the super-structure, to "keep the ministers on their toes" as he put it later. The possibility of such a village *swaraj* depends on the two major factors which Gandhi had discussed with Tagore in 1925: hard work instead of idleness, and the breaking down of the "narrow domestic walls" which divide so many villages into self-centred exclusive groups.

In Bombay, Jehangir was drawn into this constructive programme. He found his own work for *swaraj* in the Adivasi Seva Mandal (Aboriginals Service Society), founded in 1940 at Nanivli in the Thane District with the blessings of Gandhi and of Thakkar Bapa. A number of the leaders of the freedom movement in Bombay were associated with the Mandal, and Jehangir found himself working alongside B.G. Kher, the future Chief Minister, and other friends of the aboriginal peoples such as Acharya Bhise. They worked chiefly among the Warli and Katkari tribes; they opened schools and health services, helped to organise Forest Labourers'

Cooperatives, and established housing colonies where they were needed.

Side by side with this insistence — on the constructive programme Gandhi continued to think out the implications of his idea of a Shanti Sena, both on the national and the local level. "Without the recognition of non-violence on a national scale," he had written in 1939, "there is no such thing as democratic government." On the contrary, "so long as 'democracy' is sustained by violence, it cannot provide for or protect the weak."[14] The truth of that statement has become clearer than ever during the last tragic forty years; the mounting military expenditure in every country means that the needs of more and more of the world's poor go unprovided. India is no exception; our so-called 'democracy' spends a much greater proportion of its resources on military preparedness than on all its "welfare" services put together and the weak suffer.

Gandhi recognised that "there is always a 'weak majority' that would want protection against men's mischief!" Non-violent protection of the weak, however, demands preparedness of an entirely different order from that of the military. "In getting non-violent defenders," he goes on, "we have to pick and choose. Money cannot buy them. But my own experience fills me with hope." The "weapons" of such a non-violent army are those of *satyagraha*. Its training is in the whole range of activities which constitute Gandhi's constructive programme: the *charkha*, the village industries and handicrafts, the programmes for achieving social justice and harmony through equality of respect between men and women between caste and caste, between different religious communities, and the campaigns against drunkenness and gambling and the misuse of drugs. These activities are "weapons" which by their very nature provide for and protect the weak. They do more: "They give strength to the weak, and that in itself ensures the safety of democracy in a way no military might can ever do."[15] A Shanti Sena using these weapons, and backed by the willing support of a self-reliant,

truly free people, would be able to meet any crisis with the only real non-violence, the non-violence of the *strong*. Could there be a greater contrast to our accepted standards of "security", of the work of the army and the police today?

The succession of workers who hoisted the national flag were all arrested. The war mentality, in India as elsewhere, made the Government suspicious of any non-conformity, however innocent. "I understand," said Gandhi, "the Viceroy's reluctance to surrender the reins of government to us while he has to fight Germany; but I can't understand the government's desire to suppress the non-violent spirit of the nation."

These attempts at suppression were not confined to the national workers of the freedom struggle. Individuals, both Indian and foreign, who were suspected of "pacifist" leanings and remained aloof from the war effort, found their correspondence intercepted and their communication with one another made difficult. In 1941 Marjorie joined with a few other Indian and British Quakers to bring together some of these isolated believers in non-violence at the Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia (Hoshangabad) to consider what form their witness for peace could take in the circumstances. Gandhi was invited; he could not attend, but he sent his close friend and secretary Mahadev Desai to participate in the meeting. It proved to be a real experience of dialogue, on a small scale, between Western and Indian points of view, and in this way it was a modest forerunner of the World Peace Meeting in 1949, plans for which were made during the last months of Gandhi's life and with his blessing and guidance, but which was unable to meet until after his death.

In 1941, as again in 1949, those who had previously thought of their peace witness as a confrontation with the military power of the nation-state were made aware of another dimension; they were challenged to consider how the seeds of war were nurtured by the

economic and social injustices of our daily lives. "To be able to act non-violently in a crisis," Gandhi had written, "you need training. You have to alter your whole mode of life." You have to learn, that is, how to apply non-violence at all times, in small things as in great, in town and village alike. The same note had been sounded in the west, two centuries earlier, by the American Quaker John Woolman: "May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions." But Woolman's voice had been little heeded until it was reinforced by Gandhi's.

The 1941 consultation passed no resolutions and drew up no common programme, but it confronted each participant with the need to think these things out and decide what his or her personal responsibility was. In this it seems to have been in line with Gandhi's own thinking. Another friend[16] from Santiniketan who went to him a little later with the same question: what ought I to do? received a similar reply. Gandhi told him that no "special mandates" were needed, that no one line of action could be appropriate for all persons in all circumstances. But, he went on, whatever his vocation, each person could acquire a "plus" — an added dedication to truth as one saw it. Gandhi would not impose a programme upon others. "I am no law-giver," he used to say. "I am merely one who tries to follow the law." The revelation of the course of duty must come from within oneself. It could not be given, or rightly received, from outside. How often Gandhi's careful letters to those who sought his advice ended with the words: "I have said what I think is right; *the decision is yours*."

Chapter V
Quit India: 1942-44

As 1942 succeeded I941, the invasion of India by enemy forces, which in 1939 had seemed a remote hypothesis, suddenly became a near possibility. Japanese armies, having captured in quick succession the various British outposts in South-east Asia, took Rangoon and overran Burma. A Japanese invasion of the exposed east coast of India was regarded in many quarters as likely. There were many in India then, especially among the students and young people who had been influenced by Subhash Bose, who were ready to gloat over British reverses and welcome Japanese victories. Gandhi commented crisply that he saw nothing attractive in the mere prospect of "a change of masters".

In April 1942, in view of the danger of invasion, Gandhi sent to Orissa his English co-worker Mirabehn (Madeleine Slade) "to help to prepare the masses for non-cooperation and non-violent resistance". "One thing they should never do," he wrote to her. "They should never yield willing submission to the Japanese. That will be a cowardly act, and unworthy of freedom-loving people. They must not escape from one fire to fall into another and probably more terrible."[1]

At the same time Gandhi pleaded with the impatient to maintain the true spirit of non-violence in their relations with the British. "We must remove hatred of the British from our hearts," he wrote. "At least in my heart there is no such hatred. As a matter of fact I am a greater friend of the British now than I ever was. The reason for this is that at this moment they are in distress... It may be that in a moment of anger they might do things which might provoke you. Nevertheless you should not resort to violence and put non-violence to shame."

These words were written on the eve of the famous "Quit India" struggle of August 1942, which was the direct outcome of the failure of what became known as the "Cripps Mission". Aware of the military threat to the subcontinent, the British War Cabinet headed by Churchill had sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India in March 1942 with a proposal for "full dominion status", to be implemented as soon as the war was over. Cripps was one of the radical members of the all-party national government. He was a friend of India, and had close Quaker connections; Gandhi's Quaker friends Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison cabled Gandhi asking him to receive Cripps as a friend for the sake of "Andrews' legacy". This was a reference to C.F. Andrews' faith that it was possible for "the best Indians and the best Englishmen", sitting together, to work out a settlement of their political differences honourable to both. (See Chapter I.)

Gandhi recognized that Cripps was a good man, but also that he was not a free agent, being "part of the imperial machinery". The proposals he brought were unacceptable on a number of counts, not only to Gandhi but to most Indian political groups; moreover they came from a government headed by Churchill, and Indian leaders felt uncertain of their *bona fides*. Cripps returned disappointed, and Gandhi at once wrote to his English friend Horace: "How nice it would have been if he had not come with that dismal mission! I talked to him frankly as a friend for Andrews' sake, then

I came away... the whole thing has left a bad taste in the mouth. My firm opinion is that the *British should leave India now* in an orderly manner... the act would mean courage of a high order, and right doing by India." As he explained two months later to the American writer Louis Fischer, "the original idea of asking the British to go burst upon me suddenly. My feeling was, we need an answer to the Cripps failure." How like Gandhi to share his answer, first of all, with an Englishman! — an Englishman who was, and always remained, a devoted friend of India.*

Gandhi's answer, "Leave India now", ("Quit India" was the popular slogan,) met with welcome and understanding throughout the country, and not only in Congress circles. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, no blind partisan, expressed a widely-held opinion: "I hope it will not be necessary to launch mass *satyagraha*. But that depends on Britain's readiness to transfer *real* power to the representatives of the people. The people cannot be made to give their all for vague ideals to be realised after the war".[2]

At two a.m. one morning early in August, a taxi drew up outside Jehangir's Juhu shack, and Jehangir was awakened by insistent shouting. His first thought was "police", and the khaki uniforms of the three men outside seemed at a first glance to confirm his fears. A moment later, however, he had recognised two of the visitors with delight; they were Burmese friends of his Cambridge days, Aung Maung Thin and "Horace Pay" (H'toon H'pay) with whom he had had a happy reunion on a visit to Burma three years before. Now they wore British military uniform, and with them was a British Army Colonel. The taxi was dismissed and over midnight drinks the three men told their story; they were among those who had made the grim retreat out of Burma into India, crossing the Chindwin River and struggling through the wild Naga Hills, with Alexander's defeated army.

---

* Horace's services to India were recognised in 1984, when he was the recipient of one of India's highest public awards, the *Padma Bhushan*. He died in 1989.

After they had had some sleep Jehangir explained that he himself being "suspect" in British eyes, and known to be "in the opposite camp", it would be better for the British Colonel to go and report to the Army Headquarters at Colaba. His two Burmese friends remained, talking freely. "The British in Burma are finished," they said. "After that defeat, they will never be able to establish themselves again." They heard with the greatest interest of the meeting that was to take place a few days later, when Gandhi's "Quit India" resolution was to be placed before the All India Congress Committee. This was to take place at a great public meeting in Bombay, and they were eager to attend, to see Mahatma Gandhi for themselves, to get some idea of the movement and to assess Jehangir's own position in it. But they could not attend, as things were, in the uniform of the British Army which was all the clothing they had. Jehangir provided them with some ordinary Indian clothes and they set off in his car.

Near Shivaji Park there were huge, excited crowds, and the Indian drivers of British Army lorries were being harrassed and threatened. Jehangir stopped the car and tried to make himself heard, begging the crowds in the name of Gandhi to show discipline and courtesy. At first they would not listen; they surrounded the car and saw the oriental features of its passengers. "Japanese spies!" they shouted. "A traitor, carrying Japanese spies!" But then some one recognised Jehangir as one of the leaders of nationalist opinion on the cotton exchange; the crowd became quieter and allowed the car to pass.

The meeting was held on August 7 and 8 in what is now called the "August-Kranti" *maidan*[3] on the Gowalia Tank Road, amid scenes of overwhelming enthusiasm. A dense mass of humanity filled every corner and overflowed into the streets around. All the prominent Congress leaders were there. Maulana Azad presided at the microphone. Vallabhbhai Patel, silent and very strong, was seated behind Gandhi, making no appeal whatsoever to mob emo-

tions. Jawaharlal Nehru came forward, and sat down quietly at Gandhi's feet, a symbolic action which called out a great ovation from the watching crowd.

Gandhi himself made the first speech. There was a struggle ahead, he said, and those who hoped to take part in it should examine themselves. Did they have the faintest trace of communal prejudice? The faintest disposition to welcome the Japanese armies? The faintest desire to win power, not for the Indian people, but for themselves and the Congress Party? If so, the struggle was not for them and they should keep out of it.

The momentous resolution itself had been prepared both in Hindi and in English, so that there should be no possible room for misunderstanding on the part of the Viceroy and his colleagues. It was moved by Jawaharlal and seconded by Vallabhbhai. "The peril of today," it read, "necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises, but only the glow of freedom now, can release the energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war... The earnest appeal of the Congress Working Committee to Britain and the allied nations has so far met with no response. The All India Congress Committee would, at this last moment, renew this appeal. But it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale for the vindication of India's right to freedom. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji, and the Committee requests him to guide the nation in the steps to be taken."

While the meeting was in progress, Kasturba appeared with a tray in her hands, bringing Gandhi's simple meal. When the crowd saw her, they gave her an even more tremendous welcome than they had given to Jawaharlal. *Kasturba Mata Ki Jai*! they shouted.

Kasturba Mata Zindabad! Gandhi looked up, took the tray from her and ate as he listened to the deliberations. She waited quietly till he had finished and then withdrew as modestly as she had come.

The "Quit India" resolution was formally adopted, after full debate, in the evening of August 8. Then Gandhi addressed the meeting again. This time he laid all the emphasis at his command on his desire to avoid, even now, a clash with the British authorities. It was true, he said, that the resolution they had just passed was a declaration of rebellion against the present state of affairs — but in essence even this rebellion was a gesture of friendship. "I shall once more seek to reach an understanding with the Viceroy," he said. "The programme of *satyagraha* envisaged in the resolution will only be carried out if all my efforts fail. There will be *no* immediate rebellion."

It was past midnight when Gandhi returned to his host's house and went to bed. Just as he was doing so, the telephone rang. There were rumours, said the caller, that he would be arrested within a few hours. "Never!" Gandhi exclaimed. "It's impossible, after what I have just been saying." He lay down and slept, unconcerned. By five in the morning the police had arrived with their warrants, and it was soon clear that all the members of the Congress Working Committee were once more to be His Majesty's guests.

A few hours later Kasturba was arrested also. Immediately after Gandhi's arrest she had agreed to take his place and address the meeting at Shivaji Park where he was to have spoken. She would have done it faithfully and fearlessly, but her own preference was to serve her husband; she was happy to follow him into jail. She served India through him, but it is equally true that he served India through her. "She is my better half," he would say. "She moves me as no other woman in the world can." A few years earlier he had paid a beautiful tribute to her patient strength: "I learned the lesson of non-violence from my wife, when I tried to bend her to my will.

Her determined resistance on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved, ultimately made me ashamed of myself. She cured me of thinking that I was born to rule over her, and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence."

Jehangir's Burmese visitors were deeply impressed by the whole experience. For their host and guide also it was an unforgettable day. He never saw Kasturba again, for the imprisonment in the Aga Khan palace at Pune was to be her last. A sloka from the *Aitareya Brahmana* seems to us to express most beautifully the essence of the long years of partnership which ended with Kasturba's death in jail:

> Sradha patni satyam yajamanah
> Sradha-satyam taditi uttamam mithunam
>
> ["Faith is the wife, Truth the husband at whose behest the sacrifice is performed. Faith and Truth: that is the supreme conjunction."]

The *yagna*, the sacrifice, could not be performed without the wife, whose participation was an essential part of its meaning. The *yagna* symbolises the aspiration to *yoga,* to the realisation of unity. Gandhi's life-long *yagna* of Truth would have been incomplete without Kasburba's faithful companionship.

Even during the hectic days of June and July 1942 Gandhi's interest and energy had not been completely absorbed by the demands of the Quit India movement. It was wholly characteristic that while he was appealing to the British, as Government, to withdraw at once and completely, he was at the same time doing all he could to make possible the acceptance by the Indian people of a team of British volunteers, the Friends Ambulance Unit.

The Friends Ambulance Unit was staffed by young men and women, many of them Quakers, who had a conscientious objection to military service but were eager to undertake any work,

however dangerous, which would help to reduce human suffering in time of war. During the bombing of Britain in 1940 and 1941 many of them had had experience of the measures taken for the protection of the civilian population during air raids, as well as of the rescue and ambulance services and of the needs of those evacuated from their homes. With the capture by the Japanese of bases from which they could attack India by air, it became probable that the east coast cities, particularly Calcutta, might experience bombing raids. So the question arose: would India welcome a small team of experienced men and women who could help both the Government authorities and the civilian population to prepare for such an emergency and to prevent panic? The Government readily agreed, but if the team were to be regarded merely as part of the Government machinery it would not be likely to achieve much. The success of its work would depend largely on the extent to which it could win the cooperation of government and people alike - seemingly an almost impossible task in 1942!

It had been arranged that Horace Alexander should come to India with the team. He had no technical knowledge of their work, but he had what was equally important, a knowledge of India, and the friendship of its national leaders. With him came four men and two women, carefully selected for their experience and maturity of outlook. Horace explained to Gandhi the nature and basis of their work, and Gandhi introduced them to nationalist India in the columns of *Harijan*. The rest was up to them, and they rose to the occasion. Indian "freedom fighters" found it possible to work with them; strongly nationalist women's groups joined in organising the essential services for the women and children of Calcutta. And this at a time when the whole of India had been shaken by the spontaneous outbursts of popular feeling which followed the wholesale arrests of national leaders in August 1942. The record speaks well for both sides.

In the event, there was no large-scale aerial bombing of Indian cities. The quality of the team was tested not by enemy action but by natural disaster. In October 1942 a tidal wave broke the dikes which defend the fertile coastal plains of the Midnapur and Contai districts of South West Bengal. The sea poured in and devastated many square miles of rice fields, ripe for harvest; at the same time hurricane-force winds uprooted thousands of roadside trees and blocked all the approach roads.

The area was highly sensitive politically. Two months earlier, the people had reacted to the news of their leaders' arrest by seizing a police station, burning a court, damaging the railway line and setting up a parallel Government. They considered themselves "non-violent" because they had not taken life, but their actions had invited harsh measures of repression by the British authorities. Years later, when Gandhi visited Midnapur, they told him what they had done. "*That* was not non-violence," Gandhi replied. "Killing may sometimes be the cleanest part of violence; harassment may be worse. A non-violent revolution is *not* a seizure of power; it is a transformation of relationships which ends in a peaceful, willing transfer of power."

It was into these districts, sullen, resentful and suspicious, that the Friends Ambulance Unit went to relieve distress, accompanied by Bengali fellow-workers whose trust they had won in Calcutta. The full story of their service cannot be told here. They had to overcome a deeply-rooted popular distrust of anything associated with the British, including even the dried milk which the team supplied for the hungry children. Without the Bengali members of the team, nationalist to a man (or woman), with their Khadi clothes and their enthusiasm, their steady hard work and their steady loyalty to Gandhi's principles, very little could have been accomplished.

When the Quit India resolution was passed, Marjorie was not in Santiniketan. She was back in Madras, "borrowed" by a women's college there as a temporary professor of English, a post they had found it difficult to fill through normal channels in war conditions. In August 1942 and the following months feelings ran very high there as elsewhere, especially among students and the young. Nevertheless Gandhi's quiet voice did not go unheeded. Marjorie had been impressed afresh by his emphasis on the constructive programme as the high road to non-violent *swaraj*. Now, his appeals for reason and discipline, hard work and goodwill were heard, for his spirit was not silenced by the jailing of his body. Many of the students responded, and eagerly turned their energies into "growing more food" in the college compound, and into surveying and meeting, as far as they could, the needs of women and children in a Madras slum. It was a privilege to have a part in this enthusiasm, and Marjorie, who had recently completed her translation of Tagore's *Mukta Dhara*, had the pleasure of sharing its inspiration with these and many other student groups in South India, provoking a lively discussion of the place and power of non-violence in the national struggle.

In 1942-43 food shortages were serious in many parts of India; in Bengal they amounted to a second disaster. By the summer of 1943 the Bengal famine was at its worst. It was a more terrible experience even than the havoc of the tidal wave, because it was so largely man-made. Once more the Quaker teams played their part, working with Bengali partners both in emergency relief and later in the immense tasks of rehabilitation. By the time Gandhi was released from jail in May 1944 the worst of the crisis was over, although the aftermath of famine occupied Quaker and other workers for years afterwards.

Gandhi regained his freedom on the initiative of the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who made strong representations to the Secretary of State in London that release would be advisable. The circumstances

of his release opened the way for Jehangir to enter into a more intimate personal relationship with him. Up to that time he had not sought any repetition of the interview he had had at Sabarmati some fifteen years earlier. It had not seemed appropriate to thrust himself upon Gandhi without some special reason. In May 1944 however they were brought together.

Chapter VI
Release and Renewal 1944

Gandhi left the Aga Khan's Palace near Pune in May 1944 as a sick and lonely man. A serious attack of malaria had left him very weak; there was a kidney infection, there were problems of blood pressure. Kasturba was no longer there to support him with her quiet strength; Mahadev Desai, his gifted and sensitive secretary, was no longer there — he too had died in the Palace-jail. Gandhi's medical attendant Dr. Gilder accompanied him to Lady Thackersey's house in Pune; but Pune, in the heat of May, was not a good place to recuperate. Dr. Gilder pondered the matter: could not a place be found by the sea?

Jehangir was staying at his little shack in Juhu when the telephone rang. "I am speaking for Dr. Gilder," said a voice. "Would it be possible for you to put your Juhu hut at Gandhiji's disposal for a few weeks? He needs rest and quiet, if possible by the sea, and Dr. Gilder is looking for a suitable place." "Of course Gandhiji can have my shack if it suits him," Jehangir replied eagerly. "It's extremely simple, but he would probably like that, and I should be delighted for him to use it." Shortly afterwards, Dr. Gilder arrived to see the shack for himself, and to look at other places in Juhu which had also been offered for Gandhi's use. After seeing them, he returned to Jehangir. "I think this place would be best," he said.

"I will arrange for Gandhiji and his party to come in a few days' time."

Gandhi reached Juhu on May 11th. When he saw the small simple building he was very pleased. "You have made a good choice, Dr. Gilder," he told him. Then he turned to Jehangir with a cheery greeting. "You must not feel that you have to keep away," he said. "You have asked me to be your guest; please treat me as you would any other guest." Gandhi's warmth and friendliness put Jehangir entirely at his ease; it was one of Gandhi's special gifts that he could do this even with complete strangers. Jehangir happily gave himself up, during the next few weeks, to caring for Gandhi as a guest in his home. The little shack immediately became the centre of a happy comradeship; Gandhi's own exquisite courtesy, and his considerate care for the needs and convenience of others, made him an easy and delightful guest.

When he first arrived Gandhi was still so weak and unwell that interviews exhausted him, and during the first part of his stay he observed a complete and restful public silence. This did not prevent crowds of people from flocking to Juhu to see him after his long internment. Friends from every part of India, not to mention newsmen, all wanted to ask the same question, what next? Gandhi had his answer: Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel were still in jail, and could not be consulted; until he could discuss the situation with them, Gandhi refused to commit himself. As his health improved he did grant a few interviews, but they still had to be carefully regulated.

The party at Juhu was made up of a few of Gandhi's close friends and associates. One of them was Dr. Dinshaw Mehta from Pune, who gave Gandhi daily massage with great skill and affection. Pyarelal Nayyar was there as secretary, and his sister Dr. Sushila; Gandhi's son Devdas came and went with his wife Lakshmibehn. One very welcome arrival was Vijayalakshmi Pan-

dit with her youngest daughter Rita. She was the first member of the Nehru family whom Jehangir had met, and she brought with her the cultured atmosphere of her own wealthy home, while at the same time she was fully part of the team, a member of Gandhi's Juhu "family". Like Gandhi, she had suffered a heavy bereavement, for her husband had recently died in jail; Jehangir admired the dignity and fortitude of her bearing. Then, of course, there were the children, Gandhi's special joy; among them were some little fair-haired Scandinavians whose families were living nearby, and who ran about with the Indian boys and girls in the natural, universal comradeship of childhood.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu also joined the party along with her daughter Padmaja. Full of vivacity and laughter, with a quick intelligence and a ready wit, she quickly became by common consent the mother and hostess of the camp — loved, respected and obeyed by everyone. She settled down in another shack a short distance away, and made a special contribution by receiving and dealing with the stream of visitors. It was a task which called for all her great tact and understanding. Many of these visitors were foreigners. Press representatives came from all over the world, and there were also a good many military men, members of the armed forces of the various allied nations.

The soldiers came because they seriously wanted to understand Gandhi's concept of non-violence. Gandhi was always glad to see them and eager to share his thoughts and experience. Jehangir was often present at these interviews, and was impressed, many times over, by Gandhi's ability to explain in a few simple words the essence of what he stood for. For most of the soldiers it was a new idea, foreign to all their habits of thought, and they found it by no means easy to grasp. Gandhi would respond to their questions with great skill and patience; he never grew weary of talking of his faith in non-violence.

Sarojini Naidu played her part by making sure that the foreign visitors were well cared for. She believed that it was a matter of courtesy to offer them the alcoholic drinks to which they were accustomed. Jehangir agreed with her, and helped her by doing the necessary shopping. He sometimes wondered, however, what Gandhi would feel about this, and one day he asked him. "Sarojini is gold in its purest form," Gandhi replied. "She sincerely believes that she is doing the right thing; I think it would be wrong for me to interfere."

Gandhi, as is well known, never himself took any form of alcoholic drink, and Jehangir was curious to learn more about his attitude to drinking in general. Jehangir had given up drinking and smoking by that time, but he did keep a couple of bottles of wine in the refrigerator at Juhu because he wished to be able to offer drinks to guests who visited him there. Some of the members of Gandhi's party had seen the bottles, and objected that they ought not be kept in the house so long as Gandhi was present. "I am quite ready to take them away, if that is what he wishes," Jehangir had replied, "but I would prefer to talk it over with him before I do so."

An opportunity soon arose. Gandhi's English disciple Mirabehn, who was looking after his personal needs, came to Jehangir one morning very much upset. "Bapu won't be able to eat his breakfast," she said. "Some one has put meat into the fridge where his food is. How could you allow such a thing?" Jehangir went to investigate, and found that a piece of raw meat was lying alongside the fruit and other things intended for Gandhi's meal. He at once called his cook, Ali. "I got it for the dogs," said Ali. "I'll take it away at once." "No, leave it there for now," Jehangir replied, and went off to call Gandhi himself. "I want to show you something," he said. Gandhi came, along with Mirabehn. "Look, Bapu," she said when the fridge was opened, "there is raw meat next to your grapes. Jehangir should have known better." "I'm

sorry," said Jehangir. "I did not think of speaking to Ali. I did not realise that this might happen."

"Don't apologise," said Gandhi at once. "You and Ali have done nothing wrong, so far as I can see." As he spoke, he took a few grapes from the fridge and ate them on the spot. "Ali," he said, "please go on doing whatever you usually do. Don't change anything because of me." Then he turned to Mirabehn. "We are guests in our friend's house, and it would not be right for us to impose our ideas upon him or upon anyone. People whose custom it is to eat meat should not stop doing so simply because I am present."

"There is something else in this fridge for you to see," said Jehangir, showing Gandhi his two bottles of wine. "You know that I don't drink now, but I keep them as a courtesy to my guests, who will certainly offer me such drinks when I visit their homes. I don't believe in hiding these things, but I will put them away, if you wish it, while you are here." "Let them stay where they are," replied Gandhi firmly. "If you serve wine to guests, or drink it yourself, that is entirely your own affair. If you were to ask my advice, I would certainly recommend you to avoid it. But I would much rather you were a drinker, even a heavy drinker, than that there should be any deceit in the matter. Some of our friends do drink, I know, even though they try to hide it from me; I am sorry about that, I wish they would admit it openly."

Gandhi's attitude to the meat and the wine had completely relaxed the atmosphere, and Jehangir could not resist a bit of gentle teasing. He picked up one of the bottles. "Why don't you try this grape juice?" he asked. "It might be even better for your health than goats' milk!" Gandhi laughed outright. "I'll stick to goats' milk," he said. One could, in fact, discuss anything with Gandhi; there was no taboo, provided that there was no violence in one's attitude. He was quick to point out any element of violence that might creep into one's thought, even unconsciously.

In this spirit Jehangir had a number of opportunities, over the next few weeks, to learn more about his attitude to drink. "People like you are not the problem," Gandhi would say. "You people use liquor of good quality, and you have the sense not to drink to excess. It is quite possible that it does you no harm. What I am concerned about is the effect on the poor; many of them are ruining their homes and their health by drink. I shall do my utmost to stop them, and I want you to help me with the *adivasis* of Thane district."

Jehangir's work in the Adivasi Seva Mandal in Thane had certainly given him some insight into the factors that drove so many to excessive drink. Labour conditions could be harsh and inhuman, the drink-shop was only too easy to reach, and other means of relaxation and refreshment were lacking. The Government was partly responsible, for it derived some revenue from licensing the drink shops, and used this revenue to help to finance its education programme. Gandhi emphatically condemned this practice. "I would rather have India without education," he wrote, "if that is the price to be paid for making it dry."[1]

On the other hand Gandhi was equally clear about the limitations of Government action. Habits of temperance cannot be inculcated by Government order, nor can habits of intemperance be overcome. "The utmost the Government can do is to stop issuing licenses... the other part of the work will have to be undertaken by private effort." As far back as 1924 he had set out his position very clearly, in an article which has far-reaching implications, and is as relevant to the needs of India today as it was when it was first written:

> All compulsion is hateful to me. I would no more have the nation become educated by compulsion than I would have it become sober by such questionable means. I would discourage drink by refusing to open drink-shops. I would discourage

> illiteracy by opening free schools and making them responsive to the people's needs... (But) nothing is more detrimental to the true growth of society than the belief that no reform can be achieved by voluntary effort. A people so trained becomes wholly unfit for *swaraj*.[2]

In the light of such warnings about the dangers of relying on Government compulsion, Jehangir felt uneasy about the form taken by the "prohibition" legislation of the Government of Bombay after Independence. His old friend M.C. Chagla had commented that "it is no business of any Government to tell the people what they should eat and what they should drink". Jehangir agreed with him, and in November 1947 he wrote to Gandhi about his doubts, adding however that the abolition of Government food controls did not seem to him to be practicable. Gandhi was in Delhi, immersed in the immense problems that followed the partition of the country, but he replied with his usual promptitude and his usual crisp economy of words:

> "Dear Jehangir,
>
> I have read your letter carefully. I have no doubt that food control is an unmixed evil and it should go.
>
> As to alcohol, we must re-discuss the subject when we next meet. For the time being don't write anything for publication.
>
> Do return if you can with Dinshaw and we shall discuss many things.
>
> Love, Bapu"

The opportunity for discussion never came. During those months after partition the national house was on fire, as Gandhi expressed it, and both Dinshaw Mehta and Jehangir were caught up, under

his direction, in the struggle to put out the flames. That is a later story.

To return to Juhu. Wherever Gandhi went, he treated the servants in the houses where he stayed as fellow human beings. They were as important in his eyes as their masters. While he was staying with Jehangir he made it his custom to meet the servants of the houses around almost daily during their free time. Jehangir's cook Ali was of course one of them. He habitually wore a fez, but when he heard that Gandhi was to be a guest in the house, he had exchanged his fez for a "Gandhi cap".* Jehangir noticed this, and asked him why he had done it. Ali replied that the other servants had all insisted that it was the right thing. Jehangir was not happy about it, so when next Gandhi met the servants he raised the question before Ali and all the others. Gandhi turned smilingly to Ali. "Your fez," he said, "is an outward sign that you are proud of Islam, proud to be a member of your Muslim community. Please go on wearing it." So Ali resumed his fez while he was in the house, but when he went to the bazaar he continued to put on his Gandhi cap, because he was still shy of what others might say!

The incident of the fez may seem a very trivial one, but Gandhi had a way of using such trivialities to drive home a far-reaching lesson. One morning in Juhu, Jehangir found him examining the little stub of pencil which had been put ready for his use — he would never throw away a pencil till it was so short as to be unusable. "Did you sharpen this pencil, Jehangir?" he asked as Jehangir came in. "No," replied Jehangir, "Why do you ask?" "Because," Gandhi replied, "whoever did it was very angry. See how roughly and irregularly the wood has been scored and cut." "I don't see much wrong with it," said Jehangir, "but if you are interested why don't you try to pick out who did it, without asking the direct question, when we all come to breakfast?" "All right," Gandhi agreed,

---

* This was a simple cap of white homespun *Khadi* which was worn by sympathisers with the freedom movement.

"I will try." So he looked round at everyone, and then said to Manu: "Manu, you sharpened my pencil this morning, didn't you, and you were feeling angry when you did it?" "Yes, I was," she agreed. "Well," said Gandhi, "please don't sharpen my pencil while you are angry, it distresses me."

When Marjorie first heard this anecdote it recalled another trivial pencil incident on one of her own first visits to Gandhi, in which she was the culprit. Mirabehn who looked after some of the foreign correspondence, was not there, and finding that Marjorie knew some French, Gandhi had asked her to make him a translation of a letter which had arrived from Romain Rolland. Marjorie gladly did so, but her pen had run dry, and she was too shy, and at that time too ignorant of Hindi, to go exploring for ink. She, therefore, wrote the translation as clearly as she could in pencil. Gandhi took it, thanked her, and asked smilingly, yet with underlying seriousness: "Why not ink? This does violence to my eyesight!" Shyness, like anger, is self-centred, inconsiderate of the needs and convenience of others.

A happy and moving experience of the Juhu days was for Gandhi to be invited by the local Roman Catholic Church to preside at an open air mass. Gandhi had a deep respect for the prophets of all religions, and took a special interest in the welfare of minority communities, so that he warmly welcomed the invitation. One of Jehangir's old Cambridge fellow-students also happened to be present. His name was Cornelius and he came from Sri Lanka; he had a fine voice and sang a beautiful hymn. There was a British military camp not far away, where army units were being trained for the invasion of Burma; some of those men were present too. The soldiers were always friendly; they would often come to Gandhi's evening prayer meetings on the beach, and stand listening on the fringe of the crowd. At the mass that day Jehangir felt that all had been drawn into a new depth of unity to which Gandhi's presence and spiritual power had made an immeasurable contribution.

He knew that others had felt it too, from their simple, heart-felt words of thanks to Gandhi for coming to be with them.

Gandhi left Juhu on one occasion only during the five weeks of his convalescence. About a month before his release from detention a ship carrying ammunition and explosives had blown up in the Bombay docks, and devastated the area of the city around the harbour. As soon as he was released Gandhi had said that he wished to see the damage for himself; he did so on May 19th, in silence, and visited his sick friend Mangaldas Pakwasa on his way back to Juhu.

Four weeks later, on the 15th June, the peaceful interlude of convalescence came to an end. The five weeks of intimate daily contact with Gandhi were a turning-point in Jehangir's life; previously he had been a deeply sympathetic observer, now he became a member of "the family", one who shared on equal terms in whatever work needed to be done at the moment. Sarojini Naidu teasingly called him "the devotee", and he was certainly devotee enough to accompany Gandhi when he moved on during the next few weeks to Pune and then to Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar in the Western Ghats.* But the devotee had a practical streak in him too. Before Gandhi left Juhu, Jehangir and his close friend Shanti Kumar Morarji (on whose land Jehangir's shack had been built) joined to present him with a purse containing a hundred rupees each for every day of his stay in the shack. Gandhi accepted it with laughing appreciation. "If I had known about this," he joked, "I might have stayed much longer!"[3]

At Pune, Gandhi's party stayed at Dr. Dinshaw Mehta's Nature Cure clinic. Jehangir had already heard a lot about Nature Cure while Dinshaw was in Juhu, and was full of questions about it. But

---

* A *ghat* is a step, and the word is used both for the stone steps descending into a river at a "bathing ghat", and for the successive "steps" by which the coastal mountains rise from the plains.

the immediate plan was to go on to Mahabaleshwar as soon as possible. Gandhi was in need of quiet, in order to reflect on what his future programme should be, and Jehangir thought that he would probably get quiet most easily at Mahabaleshwar. However, a group of people from Panchgani came to Pune to urge him to go to Panchgani instead, and they would take no refusal. Finally a compromise was made; it was arranged that Gandhi should go first to Panchgani and afterwards move on to Mahabaleshwar.

The first problem was how to get to Panchgani. Strict wartime rationing of petrol was in force, and Gandhi would not allow any dealing in the black market. Eventually, however, a car was arranged. It was a memorable journey, for the car was stopped and besieged at every village by crowds seeking *darshan**. Gandhi would remain perfectly calm, say a few kindly words to the people, receive offerings for his Harijan fund, and make a final, urgent plea that they should never resort to violence. Then the "peripatetic temple" moved on until it was stopped again. At Wai, at the foot of the *ghat*, it was surrounded for a long time. Some of the crowd, in their excitement, even attempted to carry off pieces of the car — horn, lamps and so on — as souvenirs. This, however, the travellers managed to prevent, and so at last arrived safely at Panchgani.

The people at Panchgani had made good arrangements, and soon everyone had found a corner in which to settle down. Gandhi's capacity to make everyone feel at home was very noticeable; they quickly became part of his "family" though inevitably thoughts turned often to those dear family members who were no longer present, and were much missed — Kasturba and Mahadev.

The family atmosphere was nourished by Gandhi's sense of humour and readiness to laugh at himself. Kasturba's brother, whom

---

* *Darshan*, literally sight, vision, is commonly used for the privilege of seeing a holy person or place.

everyone affectionately called *Mama* (Uncle) was one of the party. One day Jehangir found him deep in meditation in one room; in the next room Gandhi's nephew Kanu was practising yoga *asanas*;* in a third room a lady lay sleeping, talking in her sleep. Jehangir began chuckling to himself. "What an entourage for the leader of the nation!" he thought. Just then Gandhi happened to come by. "What is amusing you now?" he asked. "Just look!" said Jehangir. "Here is Kanu standing on his head, and Mama lost to the world, and this sister fast asleep. It's a madhouse! Is this how you get independence for India?" Gandhi laughed with him. "Yes," he said. "It does seem quite ridiculous. All the same, these people are good, honest human beings, and that is all I ask. But if I couldn't laugh at myself sometimes I should have been dead years ago!" He took special delight in laughing at his title of "Mahatma": "The Mahatma I must leave to his fate..., my friend, never have anything to do with Mahatmas or with those who use their names. Mahatmas are the most slippery customers treading on this overburdened earth."

The daily prayer meetings were held in a Parsee girls school and sometimes Jehangir had the pleasure of driving Gandhi there. On the return journey, he would ask Gandhi to comment on the passages read in the prayers, and benefitted greatly from Gandhi's expositions. On one such occasion, when they were on their way to the school, the car stopped and refused to start again. "Please fix it quickly," urged Gandhi. "We must not be late." As is well known, he had a much higher standard of punctuality than most people; it was part of his standard of courtesy.

Feeling considerable misgiving, Jehangir climbed out of the car. "Somehow," he thought, "Bapu suffers from the delusion that I'm a good motor mechanic. He'll soon realise his mistake!" He opened the bonnet, juggled with the plugs and pressed the carburetor

---

* *asana*, a posture or pose.

but with no expectation of a response. Greatly to his own astonishment the engine sprang to life; he thankfully climbed back into the driving seat and they arrived at the prayer meeting on time. But the incident only served to confirm Gandhi's "delusion" about Jehangir's mechanical skill.

The schoolgirls who came to the prayer meeting were autograph hunters, and when they heard one day that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's brother was expected, they brought their albums along. He failed to turn up, however, and Gandhi's party went to the prayer meeting without him. Suddenly Jehangir found himself surrounded. The girls had heard Gandhi call him "the Pathan" — presumably because of his broad shoulders and sturdy build — and concluded he must be the man they wanted. Jehangir could not convince them he was not the genuine article until Khan Saheb himself appeared the next day.

Gandhi had not yet fully recovered his health, but he was engaged in studying the political situation. His presence in Panchgani was of course public knowledge. The Indian press followed him there and even arranged for a special telegraph office to be set up, but he was generally reluctant to give interviews, because, as he had said in Juhu, he would not commit himself until he could consult his colleagues.

However, only two or three days after Gandhi's arrival there came a British journalist who asked for an immediate interview. Jehangir happened to be acting as Gandhi's door-keeper at the time. A light screen had been used to partition Gandhi's room, and Gandhi, who was feeling a little tired was resting in the inner portion, while Jehangir sat outside. He told the British journalist that he should take his turn along with the others, but the journalist objected. "I must see Mr. Gandhi at once," he insisted. "I have a message for him from the Viceroy of India." Jehangir felt irritated; the journalist's manner seemed to him to be unduly patronising, and

he retorted naughtily: "I am not aware of the existence of any such gentleman."

At this point Jehangir heard Gandhi behind the screen clearing his throat. This was a signal that he thoroughly disapproved the way the matter was being handled. Jehangir asked the journalist to wait, and went inside. "Call him," said Gandhi. "Let me hear what message he has brought." Jehangir demurred. It was not fair to the Indian journalists, he said. "You ignore them, although they are waiting day and night. Why should you grant an interview to this foreigner who walks in without warning or notice?"

Gandhi overruled his protests. "I want to see him, Jehangir," he said. "I want to know what Lord Wavell has to say. If I can serve India by seeing this man I must certainly do so." Gandhi had considerable respect for Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, who was himself opposed to any suggestion of partitioning the country. He, therefore, admitted the journalist (Stewart Gelder of the *News Chronicle*) and talked with him as a well-wisher, at considerable length.

Gandhi did not authorise publication of this interview. ("I feel I would serve the cause better by remaining in obscurity," he said.) Nevertheless a version of it appeared in the Indian press a few days later, and he felt obliged to issue a clarification of his position. For us, two things stand out from the record. One is the genuinely democratic spirit which breathes through all of it; Gandhi disclaims any authority or desire to act or speak on his own in public affairs. The second is a comment which is all the more significant for being almost incidental: "If there is no *trust* I cannot work."

Meanwhile Jehangir told the Indian journalists that Gandhi had insisted on seeing Gelder, and they naturally asked for a conference also. After Gelder had left, Jehangir went to Gandhi with their request. Gandhi was lying resting on his cot, but he agreed to see

them. They were feeling as irritated as Jehangir had been, and one of them rather rudely accused Gandhi of having a "white-skin complex", and of contradicting today what he had said yesterday. Gandhiji answered patiently, and repeated what he had said to Jehangir, that he would never refuse to talk to a "white-skin" if he could thereby serve India. As for contradicting himself, he asked the newspapermen to give him a specific example. When they could not do so, he added with a twinkle: "Well, if I contradict on Tuesday what I said on Monday, it merely means that I have learned something in between!"

From Panchgani the party went on to Mahabaleshwar, where they stayed at a house belonging to Jehangir's friends the Morarjis. There, in the same happy family atmosphere, Gandhi taught them daily, by word and example, to grow more sensitive to the sufferings of the down-trodden poor. At the same time he knew well that there are other than physical needs, and he was equally sensitive to these, as an incident on one of the evening walks showed. On these walks inevitably Gandhi's party would be followed, at a little distance, by a crowd of people. One evening a smart chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce came towards them, slowed down and stopped; a lady got out and greeted Gandhi with deep respect. She was of royal blood, a member of the ruling family of one of the princely States, where Gandhi and his teachings were not at all welcome. "Sister," he said to her as he courteously returned her greetings, "get into your car and drive on. I would not wish you to be reported". She did so, and they did not see her again, but she had had her *darshan*.

During his stay in Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar Gandhi had a number of visits from old friends, Thakkar Bapa and others, who had not been directly involved in the Quit India movement and had therefore not been arrested. The most memorable of these occasions for Jehangir were the visits of Rajaji. He and Gandhi were old friends; Laxmibehn, Devadas Gandhi's wife, was Rajaji's daughter, and they had many other things in common. Like Gan-

dhi Rajaji kept his standards of personal simplicity, both as Chief Minister of Madras and later as Governor of Bengal and Governor-General of India. Like Gandhi he also understood the place of wise compromise. As Governor-General he lived in the utmost simplicity in two rooms of the Vice-regal palace, but at the same time he accepted, with wry humour, the public ceremonial which surrounded the Head of State. His sense of humour was as keen as Gandhi's; he too knew how to shake his friends out of tension and gloom into laughter. He and Gandhi delighted to tease one another. Gandhi would "scold" Rajaji for his failure to master Hindustani. "I shall stop writing to you in English," he would say. "Only Hindustani from now on!" "By all means," retorted Rajaji. "Write in Hindustani, I'll answer in Tamil!"

Rajaji's great intellectual powers were matched by a rare integrity of purpose and conduct. Gandhi called him "the keeper of my conscience", and he was at all times a pillar of strength. He was completely disinterested, seeking no power or position for himself, and he had the courage to oppose Gandhi publicly when he believed the latter's policies to be mistaken.

Rajaji was deeply concerned about the need for a better understanding with the Muslim population and their political leaders. As Chief Minister in Madras he had won their respect and trust, and had very happy relationships with the community.* In 1942 he had braved much abuse for saying that their right of self-determination should be recognised, and that the population of predominantly Muslim areas should be given a chance to decide for themselves whether they wished for any degree of autonomy. Finding himself out of step with the majority in the Congress Committee he had resigned his membership; he had, therefore, had no part in the Quit India resolution, and so had not been arrested. In 1943 he had been permitted to visit Gandhi in the Aga Khan Palace, and had talked

---

* When Rajaji died, some 40 years later, a member of these Muslim friends paid warm tributes to him both in India and in the Pakistan press.

with him further about approaches to the Muslim leaders. In 1944, before Gandhi's release, he had once more been in touch with Jinnah, and he was eager to discuss the situation with Gandhi. Gandhi on his part warmly welcomed Rajaji's help in assessing the various forces at work in the India into which he had just been released. He needed Rajaji's wise counsel then; India still has much to learn from a man who combined, as he did, a shrewd and statesmanlike grasp of public affairs with outstanding moral stature and a sensitiveness to spiritual realities.

That sensitiveness was to be the abiding memory which Marjorie carried away from her last meeting with Rajaji in the winter of 1971-72. She had visited him in his Madras home, along with Horace Alexander. It was a time of deep frustration politically, particularly on the international scene. We talked about these things, not very hopefully, and finally one of us said: "Oh Rajaji, is there nothing we can *do*?" Rajaji had been joking in his usual way, teasing us, keeping the conversation on a light level in spite of its serious nature. At this question he suddenly turned completely serious, and replied in a very moving way: "What can we do? Well, we can *pray*." Coming from Rajaji, who never habitually talked of religion, the words made a deep impression. We knew they came, as Gandhi's did, from the heart.

Chapter VII
*"Poorna Swaraj"**

One day at Panchgani, while Jehangir was sitting with Gandhi, a Parsee couple came to see him. Their daughter, they said, was suffering from tuberculosis and was unable to leave her bed, but she was consumed with desire to meet Gandhi and could think and talk of nothing else. They begged him to come and visit her; they hoped that his visit would soothe her and bring her peace of mind. Jehangir listened to their pleading with some dismay; if Gandhi were to start a medical practice, he thought, they might be stuck in Panchgani for good! But Gandhi could never resist such an appeal; he brushed aside objections and accompanied the two visitors, taking Jehangir with him.

The patient was a beautiful girl, sixteen or seventeen years old. Gandhi sat down by her side and quietly talked with her; he massaged her a little; he gave her his blessings. The girl responded in a wonderful way; it was as though some vital energy had been released within her, and when Gandhi rose to take leave she got up from her bed and walked with him to the car. Her parents were amazed and delighted. As they said good-bye they could not resist pointing out to Jehangir what harm he might have done if Gandhi had allowed him to stand in the way of the visit.

---

* *Poorna Swaraj* — Complete freedom

On a later occasion, some time early in 1947 when Gandhi was in Bombay, Jehangir was approached with a similar request. One of his friends, the engineer in charge of the Tata hydro-electric projects, had an invalid wife Christina, who was confined to bed with a disease of the thyroid which was expected to prove fatal. When she heard that Gandhi was in Bombay, she asked Jehangir if she could see him. Jehangir was reluctant; he did not want to encourage any false hopes of a cure for her condition. Christina insisted, however. So one evening Jehangir took her and her husband to Birla House where Gandhi was staying. Leaving them in the car outside he went and told Gandhi about the case. It had been arranged that Gandhi should see a documentary film that evening, about the work for communal harmony in the Noakhali district of Bengal,* but when he heard of Christina's need he at once cancelled the engagement and prepared to receive her instead.

Jehangir brought his friends in and introduced them, and Christina sat down near Gandhi on a mat on the floor. Her husband and Jehangir withdrew, leaving them together. It was a long interview; Gandhi gave her all the time she needed. When it was over, Jehangir accompanied her and her husband to their Churchgate apartment. Christina insisted on stopping for a meal at a restaurant on the way. She had a glow of colour in her cheeks, and she enjoyed the food — food that she had previously been forbidden to eat. "How right I was," she said to Jehangir, "to make you arrange that interview, even though you did not want to". Gandhi kept in touch with her. Her disease was not arrested, it ran its fatal course, but Christina was happy and at peace.

It was Gandhi's faith that in the providence of God no one died before their time had come. After the meeting with the invalid girl at Panchgani, Jehangir had told Gandhi how his beloved brother Behram had died of tuberculosis in spite of all that the Swiss sanatoria could do. "It was his time to go," said Gandhi. "Did he die in

---

* See Chapter IX

peace?" That for him was the important thing. Like others who have been channels of life-giving vitality, he had a serenity of spirit whose quality came from his fearlessness of death. His own full acceptance of mortality was part of the secret of his power. It was noticeable that those who were mentally ill also felt the influence of his presence; he could quieten their restlessness and control their impulses to violence.

Gandhi's keen personal interest in nursing and healing, and particularly in nature cure, went back to his early youth. "It has been a passion with me ever since my childhood," he wrote, describing how he had gone for treatment to a naturopath when he was a student in London.[1] During his first ten years in South Africa, in plague camps in Johannesburg or among Zulus wounded in battle, his aptitude for nursing "gradually developed into a passion". His own early experiments in the practice of nature-cure are described in *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*. Experience and success increased his confidence, but for many years the work remained a "hobby", a matter of personal interest and satisfaction only.

From 1933 onwards, when Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign took him into hundreds of villages all over India, he filled the pages of *Harijan* with articles about nutritious food and clean surroundings as the basic requirements for good health; these, he urged, could be had in any village by the villagers' own efforts, if only the workers who undertook to guide them were prepared to live what they preached. Merely to provide medical treatment was not enough, it was "the laziest form of service and often even mischievous",[2] because it tends to undermine self-reliance and "make people more helpless".

Gandhi's criticism of "Western" medicine had been voiced twenty-five years earlier in the pages of *Hind Swaraj* and had been much ridiculed. Half a century later, however, the wisdom of these

warnings has become evident. Self-reliance has been eroded by the prestige of "modern" medicine; people do feel helpless, and are afraid to trust their own common-sense even in the simplest matters; the doctor is visited — and paid — for every petty ailment. Gandhi recognised, with his usual realism, that the people were likely to *prefer* free medicine to propaganda for self-help. The latter would be "an uphill task", but he had no doubt that it was right for the worker "to avoid the easy thing and cheap applause". His list of acceptable medicines was a short one: quinine, castor oil, bicarbonate of soda and iodine. Even that list was destined to be reduced later.

Whenever Gandhi himself suffered from ill-health, his thoughts always turned to the millions of humble people who suffered similarly. On these occasions he would say to the doctors who attended him: "Why don't you go first to the villages? After you have treated the sick there, it will be time enough to come back and treat me." In 1944, while he was convalescing in Juhu, his mind was again occupied with the needs of those neglected millions. Now however he began to feel a more personal challenge: "The still small voice within me whispers, you have followed nature cure as a hobby for over half a century. If you hide this talent and don't make use of it, you will be as a thief. Give this also to my creatures like the rest. It will not jeopardise your other work, provided you have perfect detachment."[3]

It was natural that these thoughts should be discussed at Juhu with Dr. Dinshaw Mehta, and Jehangir shared in the discussions. Dinshaw Mehta was already working out methods of nature cure on a scientific basis at his clinic in Pune. He hoped that this might develop into a "Nature Cure University" of a caliber comparable to that of the more conventional medical schools. Gandhi's chief interest was of a different kind: how could the benefits of nature cure be made available to the ordinary people on a national scale?

In June 1944 when the three friends left Juhu for Dinshaw's home at Pune, the discussion was carried further. Dinshaw and his wife Goolbehn suggested that Gandhi might use the buildings and equipment of their clinic to practise nature cure according to his own ideas. This did not happen immediately; Gandhi was still not fully fit and was on his way to Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar for the visit described in the last chapter. In 1945 however, he spent another period at Dinshaw's clinic for much-needed rest. There, towards the end of the year, the All India Nature Cure Foundation was launched. It had three trustees: Gandhi himself, Dinshaw Mehta and Jehangir Patel. The trustees announced that from January 1st, 1946 the clinic would be operated primarily for the service of the poor under rules framed by Gandhi, who sent Munnalal G. Shah, an experienced worker from Sevagram, to help to start the new programme.

In practice this meant a big change, and difficulties soon arose. Up to then the clinic had been providing "nature cure on scientific lines" for a select clientele who could afford to pay high fees for individual treatment. These patients did not welcome the prospect of new ways. Other and more fundamental questions also demanded an answer: was the system which had evolved at Pune really suited to the needs of village patients? Should not the starting-point, for them, be the natural rules of health? Such doubts were much in Jehangir's mind during the first weeks of the new experiment, and when Gandhi came in person to stay in the clinic, in February 1946, there were fresh discussions. Within a few days Gandhi had come to the conclusion that the city-based Pune clinic was in fact unsuitable for the work he wished to do. "I was a fool," he wrote in *Harijan*, "to think that I could ever make an institute for the poor in a town. Nature cure connotes a way of life that has to be learned; the treatment to be efficacious (must) take place in or near a man's own home."[4] Less than a week later he had moved to the village of Uruli Kanchan, about twenty miles away, where he was offered a house for his use. The Pune buildings, which had been so gener-

ously made available by Dr. Dinshaw for an experiment of whose validity he was not fully convinced, were released to him for such use as he wished to make of them.

Dinshaw worked on the principle that any sound system of therapy, including nature cure, should be based on the recognised physical and biological sciences, and his approach was therefore an analytic one. Gandhi's approach was one of synthesis. In his view, nature cure should involve the whole person; it should make a change for the better in one's whole outlook on life, re-invigorate one in spirit, mind and body, evoke self-help, enhance self-respect.

In this matter Gandhi showed an insight into the basic conditions of human health which is only now being reached by some present-day medical practitioners. The recent movement towards what is called "holistic" medicine is based upon a similar conviction: that the life of a human being is an integral whole whose bodily aspect cannot be separated from the rest. Bodily health is a fruit of a *wholesome* approach to life as a *whole*.

Gandhi defined nature cure as having two aspects, "firstly, to cure diseases by taking the name of God, and secondly, to prevent illness by right and hygienic living".[5] But he went on to point out that "this cure through *Ramanama* (the name of God) cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physician has to be a living embodiment of the power of *Ramanama*. Meanwhile all that can possibly be had from the five agencies of nature must be taken and used. These are earth, water, ether (sky), sun (fire), and air (wind). If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet is, of course, an indispensable part of nature cure."

For a happy fortnight Gandhi remained at Uruli Kanchan, immersed in the work which he loved, following his natural aptitude. He personally examined the village patients, prescribed their diet

and treatment, and tackled in his characteristic way the sanitation and hygiene of the village. He visited every home, he scrutinised its bathing and sanitary arrangements, he urged the people to sleep in the open air instead of inside their airless houses. He was where he felt he belonged, among the ordinary people of India. But he could not stay there indefinitely, there were too many other calls on him. He gave a demonstration of what he meant by nature-cure as a way of living. He established a pattern; others, he hoped, would come forward to carry on the work.

In 1944, when Gandhi was beginning to work out this health programme, he was also working out his ideas for education. This, like the health programme, was seen as involving the whole person and the whole of society. The two programmes were fashioned simultaneously, and it is not surprising that they constantly overlap.

In 1937, when popularly elected governments acquired the power to direct education in the Indian provinces, Gandhi had put forward the plan for "basic national education" which had so attracted Marjorie in Madras. The plan was based on a principle which educationists in many countries endorsed: "An intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect". Gandhi insisted, however, that there was something more to be aimed at than "a healthy mind in a healthy body".In *Hind Swaraj* he had quoted with approval Huxley's description of an educated man: "His body is the servant of his will and does its work with ease and pleasure... his mind is stored with knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature; his passions are under the control of a vigorous will and a tender conscience; he has learned to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself. Such a man and no other has had a liberal education." A merely literary education, Gandhi insisted, is no education at all if it does not enable us to do our duty as human beings. "Unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with the awaken-

ing of the soul," he wrote in 1937, "the former alone would prove to be a poor, lopsided affair."[6]

During the next five years, the experimental basic schools had made encouraging progress, especially in Bihar where they were less hampered than elsewhere by official suspicions that they were "hot-beds of disaffection". During Marjorie's years in Santiniketan she kept in touch with what was going on, visited schools, and attended some of the meetings of teachers which worked out practical details step by step in the light of actual experience.

Meanwhile Gandhi's own thought was developing in a more revolutionary way. During his imprisonment in 1942-44 he reflected much about the kind of education which could nourish and maintain the spirit of *swaraj*. He reached conclusions which seemed to him so significant that he spoke of them as his "last and best" gift to India. Education and health were the key to s*waraj* at the grassroots, as distinct from a mere "brown-skin" rule in Delhi. And just as community health could not be achieved merely by providing a clinic, community education demanded much more than the mere provision of a school.

This *Nai Talim* (new education) was the theme of a major speech at Sevagram in October 1944. Education, said Gandhi, must not be thought of as confined to schools. It must continue throughout life, "from conception to cremation"; it must touch every aspect of daily living and help every man and woman to be a better citizen of their village, and therefore a better citizen of India and the world. It must aim at expanding their mental horizons; it must inculcate a spirit of neighbourliness which would rise above narrower loyalties and do away with untouchability and with communal jealousies and suspicions.

The spirit of goodwill and human neighbourliness is the acid test of good citizenship. In India we are still in great need of the

inspiration of Gandhi's *Nai Talim* to overcome the barriers of social exclusiveness and pride which bedevil our relationships even today. It is not only the Hindu community that is infected by caste and class prejudice. No religious group has a clean slate in this matter, whether or not it is openly admitted. There are still too many people who give lip-service in public to democratic principles but refuse to eat with those they look upon as socially inferior. When this kind of insult was offered to the distinguished "untouchable" leader Dr. Ambedkar during the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, Jinnah is said to have commented to Gandhi: "This is your Hinduism, where do I come in?" The insults, and the alienation, still occur — and not only among Hindus.

As a genuinely human community begins to grow, Gandhi went on, it can undertake many kinds of cooperative endeavour for the common good. Landowners and landless, craftsmen and labourers, men and women, may begin to learn by practical experience what it means to work together. The work must be "cent per cent *swadeshi*"; it must include both agriculture and the other village crafts and industries, so that it leads on naturally to *poorna swaraj* (complete freedom). To sum up, it must provide every opportunity for non-violent discipline and non-violent organisation in the practice of daily living.

Gandhi was in fact calling for an all-round training in "non-violent democracy", and developing the thought he had expressed earlier: "The real remedy (for exploitation and injustice) is non-violent democracy, *otherwise spelled true education of all*. The rich should be taught stewardship and the poor, self-help."[7]

The last sentence raises a most important issue. "Economic equality," wrote Gandhi elsewhere, "is the master-key to non-violent independence... A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists... To bring this ideal (of economic equal-

ity) into being, the entire social order has got to be reconstructed... The first step is for him who has made the ideal his own to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life; he would reduce his wants to a minimum, and exercise self-restraint in every sphere of life. Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equality is that of trusteeship of the wealthy for superfluous wealth possessed by them. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence difficult to attain".[8]

It is clear that unless this ideal of stewardship is applied with conviction by those who own the village *lands*, any cooperative planning by the village for the use of its land resources for the common good must remain a distant dream. Over the years, many people had asked Gandhi how he proposed to tackle the land problem. In 1947 Louis Fisher, his American biographer, asked the same question. Gandhi replied that the landless would acquire land, and that the landowners would be willing to part with it for them — and that no "compensation" would be possible.

After India attained independence Gandhi himself had no opportunity to try out these ideas. But a few years later Vinoba Bhave did try them out, in the *Bhoodan* (land-gift) movement which began in 1951. Considerable numbers of landlords in every part of India responded to his appeal to donate a portion of their land freely for the benefit of the landless poor in their own village. The next step was *Gram-dan* (village-gift or village-sharing). *Gram-dan* envisaged that every landowner in the village, large and small, should recognise that while he and his family might continue to be responsible for the cultivation of a particular area, the land basically belonged to the village and could not be alienated to an outsider. *Gram-dan*, when entered into with conviction and enthusiasm, opened the door for a radical reorganisation of the whole life of a village, by cooperative planning and effort, for the benefit of all its inhabitants. It was an experiment in what Gandhi called "true

socialism, Indian style", and it used his "socialist" slogan: "All land belongs to God". It was also an experiment in *Nai Talim*, in making every part of the daily life of the village contribute to the personal growth of all who participated, as human beings and as citizens of a non-violent democracy.

By and large, this imaginative experiment has not maintained its momentum or made the impact that many of us hoped it might do. There have been some fine exceptions, but the general slackening of enthusiasm had a number of causes. One of them, in our view, was the watering-down of the conditions which a village had to satisfy in order to be called a *Gram-dan* village. Like the watering-down of the conditions for satyagrahi volunteers in 1931, it was motivated by the desire to show results — quick, visible results. It is doubtful whether Gandhi would have approved this expediency any more than he did that of 1931. Another consequence of the desire for quick results was that substantial material aid was made available to *Gram-dan* villages from outside India. The knowledge that such "aid" might be obtained tempted people to acquire *Gram-dan* status for extraneous and less worthy motives, and weakened the spirit of self-reliance and *swadeshi* which were so central to Gandhi's concept of *Nai Talim*.

During the weeks that followed October 1944 Gandhi developed this theme of *Nai Talim* in a number of different ways. "The alpha and omega of education is the quest for truth",[9] he said. When asked where the quest should begin, he pointed to the parable in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, which tells how a seeker goes out in quest of Truth (Reality, God) and finds it first in food, then in knowledge, then in joy — in other words, in the satisfaction of human needs in their entirety, needs of the body, of the mind, of the spirit. On other occasions Gandhi would say — and here the link with nature cure was clear — that *Nai Talim* begins with cleanliness. This includes of course cleanliness of body and of the physical environment, not forgetting Gandhi's acid test, the bathrooms and

latrines. It also includes the inward purity of heart which issues in clean speech, clean thought, clean aspiration.

In January 1945 the Hindustani Talimi Sangh brought together teachers from all over India to confer with Gandhi about the revolutionary educational ideas he was putting before the country. Marjorie was present, and the spell-bound silence in which she and others listened to Gandhi's opening speech is still a vivid memory. "So far," he told us, "you have been in sheltered waters. I am asking you now to push out into the open sea. It is an uncharted ocean, and the pole-star of village handicrafts will be your only guide." He urged us to treat the productive crafts with full seriousness. The experience of sharing in intelligent, planned cooperative work, in which every member is benefitted by the labour of all, is itself the real education. He challenged us to spin and weave not for a money market but for our own use, to grow and process in our own village all that is needed for a healthful diet, to build well-planned airy homes and make our tools and equipment from materials available in our own locality. We should plan together for the proper maintenance of cattle and other animals, for the provision of fodder and domestic fuel, for clean drinking water and all other daily needs. This kind of cooperative independence, he reminded us, is the basis of *swaraj*. Twenty years earlier he had written in *Young India* that "real *swaraj* will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused".[10] The capacity to resist would depend on the independence of spirit which such disciplined corporate self-reliance would generate.

Two of the principles which Gandhi urged upon us in his programme of community health and education run contrary to many of our common assumptions today. We assume that "saving labour" is a good thing, and many machines for husking grain, grinding flour, and doing a multitude of other jobs which were formerly done by bodily labour, are penetrating steadily even into village

homes. There is often a real need to lighten the burden of excessive physical drudgery, especially for women, but we should also heed Gandhi's warning against physical sloth, and the harmful effects of too little natural exercise: "We are destroying matchless living machines, our own bodies, by leaving them to rust, while we substitute lifeless machinery for bodily labour." Like Huxley, he believed that the body should be able to do vigorous physical work "with ease and pleasure", and this can only be so if regular and challenging physical work is part of the normal daily routine. It has often been pointed out that the story of how Adam, the first man in the Biblical story of Creation, was obliged "to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow", should be regarded not as a curse but as a blessing.

The second principle which goes contrary to common assumptions is that production should be primarily for personal and local use and *not* for a money market. "Just as villagers cook their own *roti* (bread) or rice, so must they make their own *khadi* cloth for personal use... Pandit Nehru called *khadi* 'the livery of our freedom', but it cannot be that, so long as it is the consolation of cranks and paupers only... It must not be imposed upon the people, but it must be intelligently and willingly accepted as part of their freedom. *Khadi* made for a centralised money market can be defeated; no power can defeat the personal manufacture and use of *khadi*." The same principle applies to growing food. Diversified production of every kind of food crop in regular use means better farming, better nutrition, and better basic security than the widespread practice of monoculture for a money market, Gandhi wrote in the context of the national freedom struggle; his principles are as relevant as ever to the true freedom of the Indian village today.

At the same time Gandhi, with his genius for large scale organisation, urged that a genuinely popular *government* could play a part in bringing about this self-reliance. "Let each state government notify villagers that they will be expected to manufacture all

the cloth they need for their own use, and that no cloth will be supplied from outside after a certain date. Let the government supply raw material as needed at cost, and the tools of manufacture. Let basic food processing industries be encouraged in the same way."[11]

In Segaon village, in 1945, an attempt was made to put Gandhi's vision into practice, and to begin the villagers' education for *swaraj* by getting them to share in intelligent, planned cooperative work. The experiment was initiated, under Gandhi's guidance, by Shanta Narulkar, who was to become one of Marjorie's most valued guides and co-workers when she herself joined the *Nai Talim* "family" two or three years later. Shanta launched out into the "uncharted ocean" on the principle of the Chinese adage already quoted: "Start from what they know, build on what they have."

What the villagers of Wardha District, like many others in India then, knew only too well, was the time-consuming difficulty of obtaining their basic supplies under the rationing system, introduced by the government to combat the serious war-time shortages of 1943-44. The suggestion that they should organise a consumers' cooperative made immediate sense to them, for it meant that they could send one bullock-cart and a couple of men to Wardha to bring back supplies for the whole village; so long as each family had to act separately, much precious time was wasted. The first week, each family therefore contributed to the funds that it would normally have spent on the Wardha journey. The bullock cart went, and returned with everyone's requirements, some of them having been obtained in bulk at a cheaper rate than the individual would have had to pay.

From the first week, therefore, there was a small surplus. From the first week also it was realised that someone (and as many as possible) must be able to write records and keep accounts. For the first time some people began to see that the "three R's" could be of

practical use in daily life. Shanta built on what the villagers had — their own modest contributions to the funds and their readiness to give voluntary labour for the common good. The society was "cent per cent *swadeshi*" — it utilised the resources of man-power and money available in the village and sought no "help" from outside.

It was not long before another opportunity for education arose; a family needed a new house. Shanta got them talking about it, along with other villagers; what accommodation did they need for themselves, for their animals? Did they not also need space for a garden, windows for light and air, a doorway high enough to enter without stooping? And also, for health, dignity, privacy, a simple household latrine? The discussions that ensued were educational through and through, and when agreement was reached and the actual building was begun, fellow-villagers came forward to help the family, knowing that they too would be helped in their turn when they planned and built a new house. Each house was different, reflecting different needs and conditions, but all were built of the traditional time-tested materials available in the village itself. How different it all was from the dreary rows of identical cement-concrete "match-boxes" so often offered as "housing" to the poor in India! It is a tribute to the good sense and sensibility of our so-called "ignorant" people that even these are so often made human and inhabitable by the ingenuity and hard work of their tenants.

Shanta, herself a professional teacher, spent the greater part of her own time with the women and children. The *balwadi* (nursery school) she established in Segaon has been a model for hundreds during the last forty years; its close integration into the life of the village, and especially of the women, has never been surpassed. In the *balwadi*, and for every woman who brought her child or grand-child there, *Nai Talim* began from *safai*, from cleanliness of person and surroundings. While Shanta was arguing with the fathers about the virtues of a family latrine, the babies in the *balwadi* were de-

manding one, and refusing to "squat" indiscriminately on the village roads. Mothers who were shown how to rid their children's hair of vermin were soon applying the same treatment to their own!

This work too was cent per cent *swadeshi*. Equipment for sense-training was made from bits of wood and bamboo found on the spot; toys and games were home-made; toy bullock-carts and other things were designed to be taken to pieces, so that the children could have the fun of putting them together again, exercising both their manual dexterity and their minds at the same time.

Shanta made a fine start, but we teachers in general did not succeed in living up to Gandhi's vision. True, we worked out programmes of *Nai Talim* for the various stages of life — babyhood, adolescence, adulthood — but most of us continued to think of them in terms of the "sheltered waters" of institutions. We did not launch out into the open sea and learn to live among its currents. We did not take village handicrafts as our polestar or make any serious attempt to feed and clothe ourselves, as the villager must, by our own "bread labour". And so we failed to make *Nai Talim* "the spear-head of a silent social revolution", as Gandhi believed it could be.

Because we did *not* take village handicrafts seriously, we have also failed to do anything to stem the tide of commercialism which has all but swept away India's rich and ancient heritage of traditional craftsmanship. The precious traditions of grain storage and food processing, and the treasures of skill in the working of wood and metal and leather are dying out because the people of India in general have preferred the showy (and often shoddy) products of large-scale industry to the simple, functionally beautiful products of their own village craftsmen. And so the craftsmen starve and our country, which prides itself on "progress", is in truth being progressively impoverished. This impoverishment is not only material; even worse is the impoverishment of mind and spirit, the

loss of self-confidence and self-respect which sap the foundations of freedom.

The nature cure programme has fared little better. Its revolutionary implications have not been fulfilled; ordinary men and women, far from taking charge of their own well-being as individuals and as a community, seem to be more helpless, more dependent on the doctor and his drugs, than they were in Gandhi's time. Knowledge of the curative properties of local herbs, skill in first-aid and bone-setting, were once wide-spread in India; every village had its "experts". They are still there, in many places, but by and large these skills are in decline; foreign drugs, always costly, often useless, sometimes positively harmful, flood the remotest village bazaars. *Swadeshi* and self-reliance are weakened together.

Was Gandhi's vision, then, merely an utopian dream? He would reply, as he did reply, that "we must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it". He did have a clear picture of what he wanted, and he set about the task of getting "something approaching it", refusing to be defeated by apparent failure, because for him precept and practice were inseparable.

Chapter VIII
Sevagram:
University of Service

Gandhi's great pioneering speech on education as a life-long process was made on his own seventy-fifth birthday in October 1944. It formed part of a specially joyful birthday celebration, for after his long absence in the Aga Khan palace, the Sevagram "family" rejoiced to have him once more among them. They rejoiced too in the youthfulness of spirit, the forward-looking vigour, of his birthday speech.

A birthday celebration in the ashram meant something rather different from the festivities usual on such occasions. The ashram "vows", and especially Gandhi's radical interpretation of *asteya* (non-stealing), excluded any form of self-indulgence, any expenditure on non-essentials, which for him meant stealing from the poor. His great co-worker "Badshah" Abdul Ghaffar Khan tells the story of how on one of Gandhi's birthdays, he visited the ashram with his own two little boys. At the midday meal the children were sitting next to Gandhi who as usual was delighting in their company. "Gandhiji," said one of them after a time, "isn't it your birthday today?" "Yes it is," replied Gandhi. "Why do you ask?" "Well you see," said the child. "I thought that on your birthday there might be something special to eat — cake and chicken *pilav*, perhaps. But there is simply plain boiled pumpkin, just as usual!" Gandhi

laughed, and soon had the children laughing too, but afterwards he took Ghaffar Khan aside. "We ought to get something they would really enjoy, some meat or something," he said. "No, no", said Ghaffar Khan, "they were only joking; we always eat gladly whatever our host provides," and the children agreed.

Gandhi, however, expected adults to understand that the spirit of voluntary poverty and simplicity should be maintained even on birthdays, especially his own. On another such occasion Kasturba herself, wishing to honour her husband, had set little earthenware lamps round his seat for the evening prayer. When Gandhi saw them he at once enquired who was responsible, and then spoke publicly, and quite sternly, about the "waste" of oil on such a tribute. Was it not a breach, he asked, of the principle of *asteya*, non-stealing?

Probably most of us, when we hear such an anecdote, find all our sympathies with Kasturba. We feel that the "waste" of oil might have been condoned, and the sincere expression of her love lovingly accepted. And perhaps there is some truth in our point of view. But it is all too easy to deceive ourselves; we know ourselves to be more guilty than Kasturba ever was of "stealing" from the needy for our own comfort, and Gandhi's standard of self-discipline challenges us and shames us.

It was in Sevagram, in those closing months of 1944, that the authors of this book first came to know one another. We had both been drawn there by Gandhi's personality, by our desire to learn how we might best work for *swaraj*, and by our special interest in the two interlocking programmes which Gandhi was then putting forward as pathways to freedom. Jehangir's special interest was in nature cure, the healing of the whole person; Marjorie's interest was in *Nai Talim*, which meant the transformation of human relationships towards a healing, a wholeness, of human society. During 1944-45 we both paid a number of visits to Sevagram, and

soon discovered that our common Cambridge background was an additional bond between us.

Sevagram in those days was full of new life, new experiments, new activities. Gandhi had commented in his birthday speech on the "paralysis of despair" which seemed to have overtaken so many of the Indian people, whose initiative and originality had been stifled by an alien and rootless "education". There was no such paralysis in Sevagram. It was a place of hope, a community where initiative and originality were fostered and where creative minds and hands were at work. In Sevagram men and women were not ashamed to speak of their ultimate goal as nothing less than "the Kingdom of God within us and on earth". This daring hope was rooted in faith — faith in the power of the Spirit in human affairs. Morning and evening prayers witnessed to that faith, and were faithfully maintained; Gandhi loved to hold up before us the example of Daniel the Jew, who had openly continued to obey his religious law, and offer his thrice-daily prayers, even when the king had forbidden it on pain of death.[1]

In this community we were privileged to meet old friends and to make new ones. Ashadevi and Aryanayakam were there, with their young colleagues and students, some of whom had abandoned conventional education for the adventure of *Nai Talim*. Dr. Zakir Husain, who presided over the Nai Talim conference in January 1945, was a man whose personal integrity and dignity, culture and erudition, gave weight to all he said. For more than twenty years he had committed himself to the ideals of the great national Muslim educational centre, the Jamia Milia Islamia in Delhi, with the warm support of other Muslim national leaders such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In 1926 he had met Gandhi for the first time at the Sabarmati Ashram, where he had gone with three colleagues to ask Gandhi how far he also could help. He had been deeply moved, not only by the friendly and gracious courtesy with which they were received, but even

more by Gandhi's whole attitude to the Jamia Milia. Gandhi had made it clear that he believed in its ideals and purposes, but he would do nothing that might jeopardise its freedom to make itself, to develop its own identity. Zakir had found his own commitment strengthened and purified, and in the following years had contributed immensely from his own experience and wisdom to the working out of Gandhi's educational ideas. When after independence he became first Vice-President, then President of India, he brought to his high office a simple dignity, and an integrity and independence of spirit, which won him universal respect.

Another man whom it was a privilege to know was Kishorelal Mashruwala, the editor of *Harijan*. He had wide and intimate knowledge of every aspect of Gandhi's thought; he and Narhari Parikh most generously answered our questions and shared their experience. Kishorelal commented memorably on his standards of journalistic truth, which included truth of language: "never use an adjective if you can avoid it, still less a superlative; let the fact, the noun, speak for itself." As so often, Marjorie thought, Quaker and Gandhian standards of "careful truth" came close together.

These friends and many others combined their commitment to Gandhi's on-going "experiments with truth" with a loving care for individual needs. In those days Jehangir suffered from frequent bouts of malaria, and when he was down with fever, Aryanayakam would insist on sleeping in his room, in case he should need anything during the night. He was cared for, both medically and with motherly affection, by Dr. Soundram, while the young folks — Kanu, Abha, Manu would insist on washing his clothes and cleaning his *thali** for him. For the rest of us, the talk over *thali*-cleaning could be one of the pleasantest interludes of the day.

The Sevagram ashram had been built on land donated by Jamnalal Bajaj, and the Bajaj family home in Wardha was a regu-

---

* *thali*: the round metal plate used for meals.

lar stop-over for travellers on their way to and from Sevagram. The generous hospitality of Jamnalal's wife Janakibehn, and his son Kamalnayan's friendliness and sense of humour, made these visits a delight. Kamalnayan, who died comparatively young, went on growing as a human being right up to the last. That in itself marked him out as one of Gandhi's spiritual "family"; openness to ever-new possibilities, readiness for change, the power of inward growth, were for Gandhi the marks of the life of the spirit.[2]

It was not to be expected that these vigorous personalities should always see eye to eye about how Gandhi's principles should be worked out in practice. There were arguments, and we were sometimes involved in them. For example, Janakibehn and her fellow-workers in the *Go-Seva Sangh** believed that if milch cows were to be properly cared for, buffalo milk should not be used. She, therefore, served only cow milk to the many guests who visited her home. Sometimes demand outran supply, and the Sevagram school-children did not get their full quota "because there was a shortage". Why should the *children* go short?, asked Jehangir. If there was not enough cow milk for all, why not use buffalo milk? Some people thought that this was heresy, but Gandhi, as so often, was more open-minded. "Why not?" he said.

Nevertheless, he too tended to favour the cow. How far was this a rational choice? How far was it a reflection of popular religious sentiment, of the piety of the Vaishnava household in which he had been brought up? It seems likely that both elements were present, but in his public utterances it was the rational choice that predominated. This was characteristic.

Gandhi urged on us again and again the importance of letting reason be our "guiding star" and of not allowing ourselves to be carried away by emotion. So he pleaded for "cow protection", because of the vital importance of cattle in the rural economy of

---

* Cattle welfare society

India. Healthy cows and healthy bullocks were and are essential to the well-being of India's villages, and so to the realisation of that "*poorna swaraj*" in every village which lay at the heart of the India of his dreams. For Gandhi, the cow was "the giver of plenty", but she was also something more. Reverence for the cow was in his eyes a symbol of the reverence due to the whole living world of which the human race is a part. "Cow Protection," he wrote in 1921, "is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human beyond his species. The cow to me means the entire sub-human world. Man through the cow is encouraged to realize his identity with all that lives. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God."[3]

The present *Go-raksha** movement in India is a protest against the draining away of India's cattle wealth for the sake of quick profits in the export market. "Our entire rural economy is being undermined because of irreparable damage caused to it by indiscriminate slaughter. 80% of the animals brought to the slaughter houses are young and healthy; the old and exhausted are not wanted by the trade. A myth is being perpetuated that we have excess cattle population. In fact, during the 4 years 1972-76 alone, the National Sample Survey showed a decrease of over 25% in the number of adult cows".[4] The loss since then has reached an alarming figure.

The *Go-raksha* movement is therefore much needed, but it will gain in weight and effectiveness if it is based, as we think Gandhi would have based it, on sound unsentimental economic and ecological reasoning. Gandhi himself spoke with the utmost urgency: "Today the cow is on the brink of extinction, and I am not sure that our efforts will succeed. But if she dies, our essentially non-violent and rural civilization dies with her." The position is more serious today than it was when he spoke. If the "non-violent rural civilization" is to be saved, it will not be by appeals to emotion or

---

* *Go-raksha* — cow protection

sentiment; it will be saved by those who see the village economy as rooted in that respect for the whole living world of which the cow is a symbol.

Other queries arose about Gandhi's treatment of his own family. We have already mentioned the seeming harshness with which he had once rebuked Kasturba publicly for "wasting" oil on birthday lights. During the period we are now speaking of, Gandhi's second son, Manilal, was spending some time in the ashram. Manilal had continued to make his own home in South Africa, where he edited *Indian Opinion*, the paper his father had founded there. He was a man of sterling worth — quiet, unassuming, always ready to help; he never attempted to draw attention to the fact that he was the Mahatma's son. The whole community came to love him dearly. So long as he was in Sevagram he would give his father his daily massage, and Jehangir would watch and learn from him as he had learned from Dinshaw Mehta at Juhu. Gandhi had always thanked Dinshaw and praised him for his skill, and Jehangir was troubled that he appeared to accept Manilal's service with no outward sign of appreciation or affection. "I think you are unkind and unfair to Manilal," said Jehangir bluntly one day, "just as you used to be to Kasturba." "I do not think so," Gandhi replied. "I do not think I am unkind. On the contrary I have to struggle continually against the temptation to show partiality for my own family. There is Harilal's little daughter Sunanda, for example; because she is my own grandchild I find it difficult sometimes to treat her exactly like all the other children."

These and other arguments were an education in themselves. Gandhi never put pressure on others to accept his ideas. On the contrary he urged us *not* to accept, "unless you can do so fully with head and heart". He welcomed doubts and arguments. "The highest honour my friends can do me," he had once written in *Young India*,[5] "is to enforce in their own lives the programme that I stand for, or to resist me to the utmost if they do not believe in it." One

life-long friend who sometimes did him the honour to "resist" was the distinguished "liberal" leader V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. "Gandhi does not want blind or timid followers," he commented. "He wants clear-eyed courageous fellow-travellers. He does not want hero-worshippers; he wants fellow-worshippers of the Truth with him."

Humility is the mark of a worshipper of Truth, and Gandhi's own humility, his readiness to admit a fault or a mistake, was so pronounced that Jehangir once said, half joking: "Bapu, you are so humble that you are violent!" "What do you mean?" Gandhi asked. "Just this. You have taught us that all excess is violence. If that principle is applied to your excessive humility, what then?" "No, no, you have misunderstood," Gandhi answered. "There are no limits to goodness. Good acts, good thoughts, have no extremes, no beginning or end or boundary." Nevertheless, although he pleaded "not guilty", he was interested in the point. "The truth is," he said, "that I am not humble *enough*. Humility has to be so practised that the poorest may feel I am one of them."

Marjorie had been struck on her first visit by the gaiety of spirit which pervaded the austere and beautiful simplicity of the ashram. The gaiety radiated from Gandhi himself; there were a thousand anecdotes in circulation about his wit, his good humour and his unfailing courtesy. Yet these were the fruits of an almost life-long struggle against temptations to irritation and anger. "I have learned through bitter experience," Gandhi wrote, "the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, man's worst enemy." He knew, as Mahommed the Prophet had known, and as H.H. the Dalai Lama has recently repeated, that anger is "the most powerful obstacle to compassion, the real destroyer of inner peace and ultimately of world peace." On the wall of Gandhi's room in Sevagram, where it hung before his eyes, was a witty reminder: "If you are in the right, you can afford to keep your temper; if you are in the wrong, you can't afford to lose it!" Gandhi believed that when anger is con-

trolled, it may be transmuted into power — power for non-violent service.

"This is my second university," Jehangir would sometimes say to Gandhi. "It's a university of service, and I am happy that you should be its Chancellor. Cambridge and Sevagram go very well together." As it happened, a considerable number of India's national leaders of that generation were Cambridge men; people used to comment that at certain stages of the struggle for independence meetings of an Indian "Cambridge Society" might have been held, and well attended, in more than one of the government's jails. Certainly we both found that experiences in Cambridge and in Sevagram, far from being incompatible, complemented and enriched one another.

It was on one of these visits to Sevagram in 1945 that Gandhi invited Marjorie to join his Nai Talim team. She had gone to him for something quite different. During that year, in Santiniketan, it had been arranged that she should begin work on a biography of C.F. Andrews along with his former co-worker Banarsidas Chaturvedi. The proposal had first been made soon after Andrews' death in 1940, but under war conditions it had been impossible to collect the material, much of which had to be searched out in England. Now the war was drawing to an end, and a start could be made. One of the first steps was to ask Gandhi's permission to use the letters which Andrews had written to him over the years. Gandhi had allocated five minutes for the interview, but the matter was settled in less than two! "Of course you can use my files," said Gandhi. "But they are not here. They are in Sabarmati: I'll give you a letter to the man who is in charge of them." That was all, and Gandhi was not one to waste the remaining three minutes. "Now," he said, "it's my turn to make a request. Would you consider joining us here to work for Nai Talim?" The words took Marjorie completely by surprise: they were totally unexpected. "You know how I feel, Gandhiji," she stammered. "You know that I would like to

work for Nai Talim, but what about this Andrews' biography? I'm committed to that, and I don't know for how long." "I know that," he said. "You couldn't come at once, I know: but if later on you yourself feel it is right to come, you'll be warmly welcome at any time." No pressure; on the contrary, the courteous recognition that she too would be guided as he was, in times of critical decision, by the inner authority he knew as his Inward Voice.

The visit to Sabarmati, immediately afterwards, provided Marjorie with a moving illustration of Gandhi's way of dealing with people. She was made welcome, and the file cabinets were opened for her. The letters were still filed as they had originally arrived, by date in chronological order, letters of all kinds from all over India, some from other countries. A few had a carbon copy of Gandhi's reply attached; many more were annotated briefly to indicate the reply sent (often, no doubt, on a postcard, with Gandhi's scrupulous care in the use of public funds).* Marjorie's task was, therefore, to leaf through each file in turn, looking for Andrews' distinctive handwriting, and making notes from his letters as she found them. It was impossible not to become aware, however, that many of the other letters in the files were of a very personal and confidential nature. There they lay among the rest, for Gandhi had no secrets. He had given Marjorie no warning, no instructions. In permitting her to use his files, he had simply trusted her integrity, trusted her not to misuse his confidence. It was a tiny incident, but for her significant. Trust begets trust; it begets also the desire to prove worthy of trust.

"If I know Gandhi at all," Gandhi once wrote in one of his mischievous moods, "I can vouch for it that he never had any secret plans in his life."[6] This openness was something that some of his political opponents found extremely disconcerting. They were convinced that there must be "a catch in it somewhere", that Gandhi must somehow be playing tricks. A political leader who meant

---

* In India a postcard was, and still is, very much cheaper than a letter.

exactly what he said, with no mental reservations, was a new thing in their experience. To replace suspicion by trust, secrecy by sharing, in the political field as in the personal, would be a revolution in itself. It is one of Gandhi's many challenges to our own times. How quickly it might transform all international relationships! Disagreements might remain, but they would not be poisoned, as they are now, by mistrust.

Marjorie's next memorable encounter with Gandhi was in Santiniketan itself. When Gandhi took leave of Tagore in February 1940 Tagore had put into his hands a letter asking him to take the institution under his protection, and Gandhi had responded that he would do all he could in the common endeavour to ensure its welfare. Towards the end of 1945 he visited Santiniketan in fulfilment of that promise. He met all of us teachers and workers as a group, and listened to our questions and problems. It is not surprising that some of those who carried administrative responsibilities should raise the bogey of lack of funds. Gandhi gently suggested that this was indeed a bogey, and that costly foreign "amenities" were neither desirable nor necessary. The right kind of scholar, foreign or Indian, would be attracted not by money but by moral worth, and that would be shown in part by a dignified simplicity, by a concern for the welfare of Santiniketan's immediate village neighbours and a readiness, in the true spirit of *swadeshi*, to be content with what they could provide.

Krishna Kripalani responded to this deeper challenge by stating the central point at issue. "Since Gurudev died," he said, "we feel like a boat's crew without a helmsman; we do not know what we should steer for, what we should aim at." "The goal which has been set before you," Gandhi answered, "is not limited to Bengal, or even to India; it is for the whole world. Gurudev stood for humanity as a whole, for nothing smaller than that. He could not do that unless he represented Indian humanity as a whole, with all its destitute dumb millions. If you do not aspire to do the same, you

will not represent Gurudev as a man. You may represent him as a poet, or as a painter, or as a teacher, but you won't represent him, and history will say that his institution was a failure. I do not want history to give that verdict." In other words, Gandhi challenged us to fashion the corporate life of Santiniketan in accordance with Gurudev's *sadhana*, to continue to strive as he did towards a universal humanity which, while it rejoices in its diversity of gifts, permits of no exclusiveness, no privilege of status, no compromise with injustice.

These words led on to a discussion of the need for "social revolution". Said Gandhi:

> Social revolution is a much more difficult thing to achieve than political revolution. It is also true that without a social revolution we shall not be able to leave India happier than when we were born. I can however indicate no royal road for bringing about a social revolution except that we should represent it in every detail of our own lives... Try again and again, never say that you are defeated, never say that the people are no good. If you meet with no response, think that the failure is yours, not theirs.
>
> May I venture to suggest that there is no difficulty that cannot be overcome by *tapascharya*? That is an almost untranslatable word; the nearest approach to its true meaning is perhaps 'single-minded devotion'.

In that achievement of *tapascharya* lay the secret of Gandhi's power, and the central purpose of his University of Service.

Chapter IX
"Divide and Quit": 1945-47

While Gandhi was thus occupied with a silent but fundamental social revolution, other revolutionary political forces in India were proclaiming their arguments and counter-arguments from the housetops and the press.

When Subhash Chandra Bose escaped from Calcutta in 1941 he had found his way first to Germany. He wanted to find out for himself the attitude of the Axis powers towards India's struggle for independence. By 1943 he had visited also Japan, China and other countries of Eastern Asia, and he was convinced that Japan's declarations of sympathy were sincere. With the help of a fellow-Bengali, Rashbehari Bose, then living as an exile in Japan, he persuaded the Japanese leaders to allow him to organise a fighting force, the *Azad Hind Fauz*,* recruited from the Indian soldiers who had become Japanese prisoners of war in Singapore and Malaysia, and supported by a large number of the three million Indian residents of South East Asia. This 'Indian National Army' was made up of men — and some women — of every religious persuasion and provincial origin, and rightly prided itself on its unity of spirit and national purpose.

---

* *Azad Hind Fauz*: Free India Army

With Japanese support Subhash established a Provisional Government of Azad Hind, and posted an Indian Commissioner in the Japanese-occupied Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In the summer of 1944 the Azad Hind Fauz invaded India from Japanese-occupied Burma with the war-cry *Chalo Delhi*! *On to Delhi*!

In July that year, while Gandhi was in Panchgani, Subhash broadcast a long message to him from "somewhere in Burma".[1] The message, frank and courteous, nevertheless makes clear the basic differences in outlook between the two men. Gandhi was no dictator. "I cannot accept benevolent or any other dictatorship," he had written in *Harijan*.[2] Subhash was prepared to accept and exercise dictatorship "in a good cause". Subhash also refused to recognise the distinction Gandhi made between the British Government and the individual Briton; he would, he declared, drive *every* Briton out of India. Moreover, unlike Gandhi, he believed that it was impossible that Britain would ever consent freely to Indian independence, and therefore considered that "an armed struggle is inevitable". "India's last war of independence has begun," he concluded. "Troops of the *Azad Hind Fauz* are now fighting bravely on the soil of India. Father of our nation, in this holy war for India's liberation we ask for your blessings and good wishes."

We have found no evidence that this message ever reached Gandhi at the time. But when it was broadcast the tide of war had already turned. Many members of the Indian National Army, though not Subhash himself,* were taken prisoner by the British forces which re-occupied Burma. Keen anxiety was felt in India about the fate of these men. The Government of India bowed to public opinion and agreed to a public trial (as distinct from a military court-martial) of three of the senior officers — symbolically a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh. This meant that they could be publicly defended in law, and the defence was undertaken by Bhulabhai Desai, one of India s outstanding lawyers, and a man who had him-

* He was killed some time later in an air accident while on his way to Japan.

self been jailed by the British authorities for his part in the freedom struggle. His junior counsel was Jawaharlal Nehru.

The defence case was that the men of the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) were not traitors; on the contrary, they had shown true patriotism in reaching an agreement with the Japanese which left the occupation of India to an *Indian* army. To submit to being used as a Japanese-directed labour force, like other prisoners of war, *would* have been treason. The whole of India followed the case with breathless interest. When the court rejected the argument for the defence, and convicted the three officers of treason, there was such an upsurge of public feeling that the death sentences were suspended and never carried out.

The I.N.A. trial was followed by signs of serious disaffection in the British-controlled defence services in India itself. There were rumblings of discontent in the army; there were protests and hunger-strikes in the Royal Indian Air Force, especially at Dum Dum near Calcutta; most serious of all, in February 1946, the Royal Indian Navy mutinied at Bombay: The treatment of Indian ratings by British officers had sometimes been far from what it should have been. Their sense of human and national dignity was continually flouted, and finally they broke out into violence. There was destruction and looting, especially of property associated with the British; insults and injuries were inflicted upon individual English people. Once more, as in 1942, Jehangir's car was stopped by excited crowds, this time near Admiralty House. Once more, as in 1942, he appealed in the name of Gandhi for discipline and self-restraint. The riotous ratings, somewhat abashed but still sullenly resentful, let him go.

"I am unable to think these were acts of hooligans," commented Gandhi. "Who are hooligans? The fashion of blaming hooligans ought to be given up. We are the makers of the brand."[3] He strongly condemned those who had attacked defenceless English women

and children because they had a grievance against the Government. At the same time he repeated what he had said in 1931, that "people generally do not take to *goondaism* (hooliganism) for the love of it. It is a symptom of a deeper-seated disease in the body politic. The *goondas* are part of us; we should feel the ability to deal with them in a non-violent manner."[4] Now in Bombay he reminded people once more that *ahimsa*, non-violence, belongs to the brave, and that we have to cultivate courage if we are to deal either with *goondas*, or with the foreign government, in truth and non-violence.[5]

Thus, in the immediate post-war years, non-violent *satyagraha* was being challenged as a method of political struggle, and the method of military force was being used as a political weapon. There were equally serious challenges to Gandhi's concept of what the *content* of *swaraj* should be, after it was won. His "dream" of an India of self-reliant village republics was confronted by Jawaharlal Nehru's policy of large-scale industrial development, and by the Marxist-Leninist socialism of another rising young leader, Jayaprakash Narayan.

Gandhi did not enter into any direct controversy with these fellow-patriots and fellow-workers, though he made his own position quite clear. His answer to Nehru had been given long before, when in 1909 he had written *Hind Swaraj*. In 1945 he told Nehru that the position he had taken then remained essentially unchanged: he wanted *swaraj* for India's civilisation even more than for her territory. As for "state socialism" such as was being practised in Russia, we have already seen that Gandhi "looked upon any increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear", because of its erosion of personal responsibility and initiative, even though it may appear to lessen exploitation.

This criticism of course can and should be applied to excessive State power of any political colouring, and the same may be

said of Gandhi's further, more philosophical argument: "Socialism and Communism of the west are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that man can respond to the call of the spirit in him and therefore can rise superior to selfishness and violence. These belong to his brute nature, not to his immortal spirit."[6] Capitalism, no less than Communism, is based on the assumption that human beings are essentially selfish. Gandhi has often been criticised for his friendliness towards Indian capitalists, such as G.D. Birla. But this friendly attitude was a recognition that Birla and others like him were fellow human beings; it sprang from the same source as his persistent personal friendliness towards political opponents, whether British or Indian. It implied no blind acceptance of their business standards. On the contrary, Gandhi would say with a twinkle that as a "fellow-*bania*" he was up to all their tricks; they could not hoodwink *him*! And he lost no opportunity to set before them his challenge to simplify drastically their personal lives and become stewards of their wealth for the common good.

Gandhi, therefore, claimed to be a socialist, *Indian* style. "Real socialism," he wrote, "has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: 'All land belongs to *Gopal* (God)'; where then is the boundary line? Man has made that line; man can therefore unmake it."[7] In later years Jayaprakash himself was to abandon his "western socialism" in favour of Gandhi's Indian social revolution.

Meanwhile with the end of the war the immediate political situation had dramatically changed. British electors had refused to return their war premier Winston Churchill and his party to power in time of peace. A Labour Government took office in London and at once took action to redeem its pledges of freedom for India. The new Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, urged

Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison to return to India as quickly as possible in order to help to convince the Indian leaders that the new British Government really meant business. During the summer of 1946 Pethick-Lawrence himself and two other members of the Cabinet followed them, determined to work out the terms for an early transfer of power.

With the substance of political power thus an immediate prospect, individuals and parties within India began to manoeuvre for the lion's share, and it was impossible for Gandhi not to be involved in the political hurly-burly which ensued. He bluntly warned the Congress against "the unseemly and vulgar competition for gaining what are described as prize posts", and the smug expectation that those imprisoned in 1942 should, regardless of their political ability, have "first preference in elections and offices".[8]

Six years had elapsed since the Muslim League, in March 1940, had declared "Pakistan" to be its political goal. There seemed to be no possible compromise between the claim that Muslims were a separate nation with a right to control their own territory, and the position that Hindustan should remain *akhand* (undivided) and belong to all who are born within its borders. The impasse remained, in spite of Rajaji's strenuous efforts to find a way out.

In 1944, after Gandhi's release and recovery, the talks between him and Jinnah, for which Rajaji had done so much to prepare the way, took place at Jinnah's home in Bombay. The talks were not a success, although the two men went on meeting at intervals for nearly three weeks. Jehangir, in intimate daily contact with Gandhi, knew how deeply he was distressed by the experience. This was not because he and Jinnah differed about the "two-nation" theory — that disagreement Gandhi accepted; he would not coerce Jinnah, or attempt to thrust his own point of view down Jinnah's throat. What hurt him was Jinnah's unwillingness to approach what seemed to Gandhi an essentially human problem in human terms.

"Mr. Gandhi," he asked as they met, "whom do you represent?" Gandhi could only reply, as always, that he tried to be the voice of the voiceless, powerless poor. "You have no *locus standi*, then," said Jinnah. "As President of the Muslim League I can negotiate only with my counterpart in the Congress." Jinnah, the brilliant constitutional lawyer, was in effect seeking to treat the problem as essentially one of constitutional adjustment. This attitude was alien to Gandhi, but he sensed Jinnah's nervous tension and spoke to him affectionately. "You are not yourself; you need to relax. Let me send Dinshaw to massage you, it will help you." Dinshaw Mehta's massage did help, but nevertheless the talks achieved nothing.

In the summer of 1946, following the visit of the Cabinet Mission, Lord Wavell's efforts to form an interim national government representing both Congress and League were similarly doomed to failure. Once, in Panchgani in 1944, when Jehangir happened to be alone with Gandhi, he had said to him: "Why not entrust Jinnah with the whole responsibility of forming a national cabinet? After all, he and his followers are our fellow Indians and our old fellow-workers." "I like the idea," Gandhi replied, "but I don't think either Jawaharlal or Vallabhbhai would agree. And I can't consult them, they are in jail." In 1946, however, as a political realist, Gandhi did suggest to Wavell that he should invite either the League or the Congress to form a government; he should not attempt to get them to work in the same team.

In September 1946 an interim ministry headed by Jawaharlal Nehru finally took office, but not before communal rioting on a large scale had plunged much of the country into darkness. Violence was sparked off in Calcutta by a "Pakistan Demand Day" in mid-August. Murderous attacks were made by Muslims upon Hindus, then increasingly by Hindus upon Muslims, which the local police were unable or unwilling to control. The army was called in and restored order, but hatred and resentment smouldered on be-

FOREWORD

by M. K. Gandhi

Charlie Andrews was simple like a child, upright as a lie and shy to a degree. For the biographers the work has been a labour of love. A life such as Andrews' needs no introduction. It is its own introduction.

New Delhi M K Gandhi
8-12-'47

low the surface. Soon, "revenge" for Muslim sufferings in Calcutta was being exacted from innocent Hindu villagers in Noakhali in East Bengal; "revenge" for Noakhali was then claimed from equally innocent Muslim villagers in Bihar.

The story of Gandhi's heroic efforts to restore sanity and reawaken human kindness in Noakhali is well documented and well known. The present writers had no part in them. Marjorie had gone to England in connection with the biography of Andrews, to collect from his surviving friends as much material as possible about his early life. Jehangir was not a member of Gandhi's Noakhali team, for Gandhi had strictly limited its numbers and chosen those who knew Bengali. He spent the whole of the winter months of 1946-47 in the Noakhali villages; after he left Noakhali he also paid a number of visits between March and July 1947 to the devastated Bihari villages.

Marjorie returned to India in March 1947, and during the following months she and Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi completed their joint biography of C.F. Andrews. When it was ready for publication they showed it to Gandhi and asked him for a Foreword. Gandhi gladly responded, with a few short moving sentences. When Horace Alexander saw them he thought they were *too* short; he went to Gandhi and asked him to expand them. It was Gandhi's weekly day of silence; he listened and then penciled his reply: "What I wrote came from the heart." The Foreword stood unchanged. It reads: "Charlie Andrews was simple like a child, upright as a die and shy to a degree. For the biographers the work has been a labour of love. A life such as Andrews' needs no introduction; it is its own introduction."

Now that the book was at last finished Marjorie began to prepare herself for the work in *Nai Talim* to which Gandhi had invited her in 1945. She was still based at Santiniketan, and during those last months of British rule she saw a good deal of the members of

the Friends Service Unit, who in 1946-47 were working in the wrecked streets of Calcutta and the ruined homes of Bihar, as well as in the future "East Pakistan", for Hindu and Muslim victims alike. They often sought Gandhi's guidance, and Marjorie was drawn into the discussions.

In May 1947 an opportunity arose for Jehangir to gain some insight into the significance of Gandhi's life in a wider Asian context. It was desirable to re-establish the international trade links which had been disrupted by the war. Jehangir had had a long pre-war connection with Japan, and was invited to join a trade mission to that country. He hesitated to leave India at such a critical time, when the possibility of partition loomed ahead. Gandhi urged him to go. "I think your fears of partition are unfounded," he said. "In Japan, you may have a chance to meet General MacArthur, and if you do, you should put before him the claims of non-violence. The problems of the world are insoluble without it, and this is an opportunity which should not be missed." Japan was still under military occupation by allied forces from various nations, and General MacArthur was the Supreme Commander.

At that time there were no direct flights from India to Japan, and the Trade Mission was delayed in Shanghai. Jehangir visited Nanking, which was then the seat of Chang Kai Shek's government. Peking (Beijing) was already in Communist hands, and Mao Ze Dong's area of control was steadily increasing. Russia, it seemed, was likely to play an important part in China in the near future, and Jehangir was glad of the opportunity to meet one of the Russian diplomats in Nanking and to have a talk with him.

"The future of Asia now rests with China, Japan and India," the Soviet diplomat said. "In South-east Asia, it is of vital importance that the living standards of the people should be raised, and Gandhi has a key role there. As for Japan, she will become a great power, for she is disciplined and hard-working; she is also united,

and that is fundamental." This man and his colleagues impressed Jehangir by their quality. They did not stand on ceremony, they were approachable and friendly, and they knew the people and the forces they were dealing with far better than most of their western counterparts.

When a few days later the Trade Mission reached Tokyo, Jehangir's first feeling was a shock of sadness at the contrast it presented to the gay and brilliant Tokyo he had known in the years before the war. American G.I.'s lounged about the airport, and shouted orders at the Japanese labourers who were loading and unloading planes, working hard and well. Hungry Japanese children hung around the G.I. store close by, hoping that some of the G.I.'s who went in and out would slip a little chocolate or candy surreptitiously into their hands. They were not disappointed. "Fraternisation with the enemy" was forbidden, even when the "enemy" was a hungry six-year-old. But the good-natured soldiers, to their credit, found ways of obeying the law in the letter but ignoring it in the spirit: no talking, but the chocolate and candy "talked" effectively enough in their own way.

Jehangir was irritated to find that these anti-fraternisation rules were applied even to the Trade Mission. How could there be trade, he wondered, without trust and good will? He had a number of Japanese friends who had lived in Bombay before the war, and he was particularly eager to meet one of them, Mr. Kinoshita. When his own elder brother had died, Jehangir had still been a novice in commercial circles, and Kinoshita had helped and guided him with great generosity. He felt the deepest respect and affection for him, and he found it an intolerable insult that under the non-fraternisation rules Kinoshita would not be allowed to use the front entrance of the Trade Mission's quarters. Jehangir, who had gone down to receive him, argued without avail with the army officer on duty. "The law is the law," said the officer. "It will have to be obeyed." "When it runs counter to humanity it will have to be disobeyed,"

Jehangir retorted. A crisis seemed to be brewing, but was averted by the arrival of Mr. Kinoshita himself, who had humbly slipped in by the back entrance while his champion was arguing at the front.

While the Trade Mission's work was still in progress, Jehangir's mother died in Bombay. He had known that she had terminal cancer and that death might come at any time, and he had told Gandhi of her condition. Gandhi, whose concern as always was that the sick should die in peace when their time came, wrote her a number of letters which brought her much comfort and strength of spirit. Jehangir himself decided to stay in Japan until the Trade Mission had completed its work, but he was restless and unhappy; the news that the partition of India had been decided on confirmed his own forebodings. Some months later, back in India, he was able to get Gandhi alone for a few minutes. "What happened?" he asked. "How did it come about?" "It was the work of four men," Gandhi answered, "Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai, Jinnah and Mountbatten. They didn't consult me; while I was away in Bihar they presented me with the *fait accompli*. I was tempted to feel that my whole life's work had been destroyed."

The Trade Mission was still in Japan when the official celebration of India's independence took place. Once more there was non-fraternisation; no representatives of Japan were invited or allowed to attend. Jehangir and others were disgusted that more stress seemed to be laid by official speakers on the benefits of British rule than on India's pride in the achievement of independence and her gratitude to its architects. They decided to hold another (unofficial) party and express their own feelings. Luckily for them, the overall command of the British Section of the army of occupation, which included an Indian contingent, was in the hands of General Srinagesh who well understood their feelings about non-fraternisation. With his quiet connivance the rules were ignored. Former Japanese residents in India came to rejoice with their Indian friends. Some of them spoke in Hindi; one of the Trade Mission members,

Abu N. Fatehally, who had lived for years in Japan, replied in Japanese. It was a happy occasion. India's achievement, and the significant role which Gandhi's non-violent struggle had played in it, seemed to many of those present to herald a new dawn of cooperation and good will among Asia's awakening nations.

While the Trade Mission was in Japan, General Srinagesh had arranged for Jehangir to visit Hiroshima, where he saw the marks of the terrible human suffering inflicted on the city by the atom bomb two years earlier. He also carried an introduction from Dr. Homi Bhabha to two Japanese nuclear scientists, Dr. Yoshikawa (later to be awarded a Nobel prize) and his colleague Dr. Nishima. They had been working on the responsible development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and were horrified by the prostitution of scientific discovery to military uses. They gave their Indian visitor a warm welcome, and talked with him as fellow-Asians, interested in the welfare of all Asia's people equally.

At almost the same time, in August 1947, some Indian nuclear scientists were seeking out Gandhi in Calcutta. They were concerned, like their Japanese counterparts, that nuclear power should be used for peace and not for war. What should they do, they asked, if required by the State to undertake nuclear research for military ends? Gandhi's reply was clear and uncompromising: they should resist such a State to the death.

Chapter X
Independence and After: August 1947

What was Gandhi doing in Calcutta, on Independence Day and during the days that followed? When partition had been decided on, he had promised the people of Noakhali that he would return and be with them when their district became part of the new State of Pakistan. What had happened to make him change his plans?

In India, as August 1947 drew near, there were many who viewed the prospect of the impending partition with grave anxiety. Gandhi himself suffered acutely. "Inside me there is a conflagration," he wrote. "My heart is weeping — what can I do?" For months tension had been mounting, especially in the Punjab. There was "violence of the most cowardly type" in Lahore, Amritsar and other places. It stank in his nostrils, he said, and towards the end of July he visited Punjab in person. He was met by hostile demonstrations; there was even an attempt to bomb his train.

From Punjab, Gandhi went on to the riot-torn villages of Bihar. He had paid them several visits during the previous months trying to bring a change of heart to the Hindus, and courage to the fear-stricken Muslims. On the ninth of August he left Bihar and went to Calcutta, intending to go on from there to Noakhali and fulfill his

promise to the villagers there. Tension in Calcutta was acute; thousands had been murdered in the streets there less than a year earlier, and for months the city had been on the verge of civil war. Foreign members of the Friends Service Unit often had to escort their Indian colleagues home, when the route lay through the territory of the "other" community. In preparation for the fifteenth of August, Independence Day, a number of streets had been barricaded with barbed wire. The Friends Service Unit was standing by, with trucks prepared as ambulances, ready for a possible serious emergency.

No sooner had Gandhi reached the Sodepur Ashram, his usual Calcutta base, than he was visited by leading Calcutta Muslims. "You must stay here," they said, "and help to keep the peace in Calcutta. If there is peace in Calcutta there will be peace throughout Bengal, in Pakistani East Bengal and Indian West Bengal alike." "But I have given my promise to the people of Noakhali," protested Gandhi. "I cannot break my word." For him, a promise was sacred; faithfulness to a promise was a part of Truth. "A breach of promise shakes me to my root," he had written, "especially when I am in any way connected with the author of the breach."*

Nevertheless, Gandhi understood the urgency of Calcutta's need. He demanded, and received, a categorical assurance that the Muslim leaders who were taking office in the new government of East Pakistan would see to it that the Hindu population was unmolested and secure. Having thus got the cooperation of the key men, and so fulfilled his pledge to stand by the Noakhali Hindus, he turned his attention to Calcutta.

---

* (*Harijan,* 11.3.1939)
Our Quaker friend Reginald Reynolds, during his early days with Gandhi, once remarked lightly in Gandhi's hearing: "I really don't want to give a talk at that school — I must try to get out of it!" He was brought up sharply by Gandhi's shocked reaction: "But you *promised*! You can't break your promise!"

The Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, over the last few years, had been a Muslim politician, Shaheed Suhrawardy. He had been a sharp critic of Gandhi, whom he had once described as "that old fraud", and he was widely held to be responsible for the failure of the police to take effective control of the Calcutta rioting in August 1946. Now, Suhrawardy was one of those who pressed Gandhi most strongly to remain in Calcutta. Gandhi responded by inviting Suhrawardy to work alongside him in the task of keeping the peace. He proposed that they should both go and live in some deserted Muslim house, and persuade the local Hindus to invite the Muslims to return to their homes. After they had succeeded in one area they might then move on to other areas, some predominantly Muslim, some predominantly Hindu, and do the same there, until good relationships were restored throughout the city. Suhrawardy agreed, and they chose an empty Muslim house in Baliaghat. On the thirteenth of August they moved in; their personal needs were cared for affectionately and well by young Muslim volunteers.

The house was soon surrounded by a crowd of excited young Hindus. These boys belonged to Hindu organisations which had been eagerly drilling all over the city, preparing to celebrate Independence Day by forcing all Muslims to leave their homes for Pakistan, and so achieve a purely Hindu India. They had no desire to have Gandhi interfering with their plans. "Gandhi go back!" they shouted, and began to throw stones at the windows of the house. Horace Alexander, who at Gandhi's invitation had come to stay with him there, was struck on the forehead by one of the stones.

Finally, however, Gandhi was able to persuade some of the leaders of the crowd to come in and talk things over. It was a long, strenuous talk. What kind of independent India did they want to show to the world, Gandhi asked — a land of narrow fanaticism or a land of tolerance and generosity? He sent them home to reflect

on his words. Next morning they came back. "Gandhiji," they said, "you are right and we will support you. As long as you stay in Calcutta you can count on us."

But while the majority of the Hindu boys were ready now to accept Gandhi, many of them were not ready to accept Suhrawardy. That evening, the fourteenth of August, Gandhi held his evening prayer as usual, and as usual a large crowd had gathered. Suhrawardy had stayed away, fearing that his presence might irritate the crowd. As the prayers drew to a close some of the young men realised that he was not there, that he had stayed inside the house, and there were hostile shouts. The policeman on duty closed the house shutters, but the noise outside mounted, and it seemed that the angry crowd must soon break in. What followed should be told in the words of Horace Alexander, who writes as an eye-witness:

"As the noise continued, Gandhi went to the window, threw open the shutters, and began talking in a low voice to the young men outside. Immediately there was silence, for they all wanted to hear what Gandhi was saying. He upbraided them for showing hostility to Suhrawardy, who whatever he might have done in the past had now agreed to join Gandhi himself in the effort to bring peace. If they accepted Gandhi they must also accept his colleague.

"Finally, Gandhi brought Suhrawardy forward, and stood beside him, with one hand on the Muslim's shoulder. Then a young man shouted at Suhrawardy: 'Do you accept the blame for the great Calcutta killing of last year?' 'Yes,' replied Suhrawardy, 'I do accept that responsibility. I am ashamed of it.' 'That,' commented Gandhi a few minutes later, when he insisted on telling me all that had just happened, 'that was the critical moment. There is nothing more effective than public confession for clearing the atmosphere. In that moment he won them over.' "

"Yes, Suhrawardy's words touched the crowd, and as he went on speaking they listened quietly. Before he had finished, a police messenger arrived. In another part of the city Hindus and Muslims together, crossing the invisible barriers which had so long divided them, were preparing to raise the national flag. The crowd cheered the announcement, and then Gandhi sent them home to prepare for the following day."

How would Gandhi himself spend the fifteenth of August? He explained his plans in person to Horace Alexander: "I shall spend it, with those who wish to join me, in prayer and fasting. At every decisive moment in the national life the appropriate thing is to turn first to God, to pray for courage and wisdom for the road ahead. Fasting is also appropriate. On this first day of our freedom we may not forget the poor and hungry, who cannot celebrate by feasting, however much they might wish it." Then he added, with characteristic courtesy: "You are my guest. If you want food tomorrow I will see that you get it."

On the fifteenth morning, while Gandhi's party were seated for the early morning prayer, they heard girls' voices singing, approaching through the darkness. The girls came to greet the Mahatma with Rabindranath Tagore's great Bengali songs of freedom, joined in the prayer, and went away with Gandhi's blessing. Others came later, and then Horace's colleagues from the Friends Service Unit came and took him out to see what was going on in the city. The miracle had happened. After a year of the darkness of fear, the sun shone brightly once more, and Calcutta was intoxicated with joy. Truck-loads of Indian soldiers, who had been patrolling the city with guns and fixed bayonets, put aside their weapons and joined the joyful tumult. All Bengal, East and West alike, celebrated independence in peace. Lord Mountbatten, hearing in Delhi of what had happened, spoke of the "one-man boundary force"; then, recognising how important Suhrawardy's part had been, he corrected himself — "a two-man boundary force", he said.

A few days later Muslims celebrated Id, and many in Calcutta invited their Hindu, Sikh and Christian neighbours to share their feast. Gandhi welcomed these gestures of goodwill, but he was not carried away by the upsurge of emotion. He knew that there were significant political groups who had remained aloof from him, and that dissatisfaction still smouldered, especially among extremist Hindu elements. There was sinister evidence that arms were being collected. At the very end of August there was a deliberately faked "incident"; when Gandhi failed to fall into the trap, a group of young hotheads attacked his party with sticks and stones. He himself narrowly escaped being struck, although help came quickly.

The attempt to break the peace found no support among the general public, or among the responsible political leaders. Nevertheless, sporadic violence broke out again in many places. Gandhi then announced an immediate fast, to be ended only when the leaders of *all* sections of the community were ready to give him a united written guarantee that they would ensure the maintenance of peace.

Four significant days followed. Marjorie arrived in Calcutta in time to share the experience. She had spent the fifteenth of August in the remote Champaran District of North Bihar, where thirty years earlier Gandhi had conducted his first Indian campaign of *satyagraha*. She had gone there to visit and study the vigorously developing "basic" schools with which the district was now dotted, and in which children were learning something of the meaning of democratic freedom and cooperation by intelligent, responsible labour in field and workshop. From Bihar, she had come to Calcutta on her way to Madras.

This was the only one of Gandhi's fasts which either of us experienced at close quarters, and it seems right to pause and reflect upon the place and meaning of fasting in Gandhi's life. For

many, both in India and outside, fasting was an uncongenial form of action; it seemed to them to smack of unreason and of unfair moral coercion, and to be alien from the spirit of non-violence.

For Gandhi, fasting was primarily a means of self-purification. He recognised that power corrupts those who are not pure enough to exercise it justly, and he believed that purity of aims depends on purity of heart. At the same time he was aware of the dangers to which his critics pointed. "The weapon of fasting can easily savour of violence," he commented,[1] and he rarely used it as a "weapon". "I do not undertake fasts for my amusement," he once wrote sardonically... "Let no one imagine that I do not suffer. Fasts are bearable only because they are imposed on me by a Higher Power."[2]

What then was the higher compulsion which led Gandhi to fast in Calcutta? A friend who shared the experience of those unforgettable days has written of their deeper meaning in a booklet intended for American readers, which is worthy of being more widely known.[3]

"Nothing that happens, happens totally outside us; we are responsible, directly or indirectly, for all that affects humanity; the suffering of our fellows must involve our own suffering and service. When we fail to be involved, when one part of humanity fails to respond to the pain of another, how do we restore the lost sensitivity? When reports of innocent women and children bombed and stabbed in city riots have ceased to move us, how do we recover our humanity?

"Gandhi undertook his fast, in obedience to the Inward Voice, to demonstrate and restore healthy human relationships in Calcutta. In Noakhali a few months earlier fasting had not been called for; in its small villages no one could fail to be involved; there were no mere onlookers, as there were in the city. It was in the city then that

he undertook to suffer and atone, to rekindle the dead ashes of human kindliness.

"The challenge was clear. There he lay in a broken house, among streets where brutal deeds had been done, and everyone knew that within a day or two the physical pain would amount to an hourly torture, the toxic processes would bring death inexorably nearer. People began to feel uncomfortable; they could not get him out of their minds; they got more and more involved. Students would come up to their teachers and ask to be excused from classes — they felt too disturbed to attend. 'Why?' we would ask. 'You say you don't believe in Gandhi's methods, so why be disturbed?' 'Why should Gandhi of all people suffer for the killings in the city?' they would stammer. '*He* has had no part in them.' Some even gathered together weapons, at great personal risk, from homes and streets, and brought them to Gandhi. 'Promise us,' they would plead, 'to break your fast.' Gandhi would look at such groups, his eyes luminous with the suffering which his will had mastered. 'Why?' he would ask. 'Why does it matter to you if one old man of 78 suffers and dies? You have allowed hundreds of equally innocent people to suffer and die — why do you bother about me?'

"Slowly, the numbed human feelings were re-awakened. Men came home from office to find their food prepared, but also that their wives and mothers would not eat. How could they, they asked, when Gandhi was dying for their crimes? Restaurants closed their doors, there was no business. The pain began to be felt, the pain of society because of the pain of its members, Hindu and Muslim alike.

"Meanwhile, more and more groups came to surrender their illegal weapons at Gandhi's feet. Residents of the worst-affected areas, Hindus and Muslims together, came with their signed pledges that there should be no more bloodshed. Rajaji, the Governor of the State, had won the respect of the Muslims of Bengal, as earlier

he had won their respect in Madras. He now threw himself into the negotiations with the formerly intransigent political leaders, and himself drafted the pledge which they all signed, and which, on September 4, enabled Gandhi to break his fast. Rabindranath Tagore was no longer alive, but the hymn from *Gitanjali* which he had sung when Gandhi broke his fast in Pune in 1932 was sung once more at the prayers preceding the breaking of the fast in Calcutta.

"An immense release filled the atmosphere. Release turned into rejoicing; the fast ended in feasts in which the formerly warring communities joined heartily, while Gandhi sipped his small glass of orange juice."

But Gandhi, who had not believed in the earlier "seven day miracle", spent the next few days getting goodwill translated into action — organising, through an army of willing helpers, the nursing of the wounded, the re-thatching of houses, the cleaning of the streets, the re-opening of the markets. People became involved with one another in a common human task, and the barriers set up in the name of "religion" and "politics" were broken down.

On September 9th Gandhi left for Delhi, where his presence was being demanded with mounting urgency.

A few days later Jehangir reached Calcutta on his way home from Japan, and immediately sought out Rajaji. "Don't go to Bombay," said Rajaji. "Go straight to Bapu in Delhi. Delhi is on fire."

Chapter XI
A House on Fire: Delhi 1947-48

When Gandhi reached Delhi on September 10th he found it, literally and metaphorically, a city of the dead. Muslim refugees from East Punjab, Hindu and Sikh refugees from West Punjab, had poured in by thousands, sometimes to be knifed in open daylight on the railway platforms. Heavy September rains added to the misery of the open camps in which they were housed. The great vegetable markets of Sabzimandi were deserted, all activity paralysed by communal warfare. Gandhi toured the city, seeing and feeling the chaos of passion and terror.

During that summer of 1947, even before the actual partition had taken place, 95% of Gandhi's mail had been filled with bitter abuse. He did not allow it to deflect him from his path. One of Tagore's songs, a favourite of his, echoed constantly in his heart: "If no one responds to your call, walk alone, walk alone." But he never walked quite alone during those dark months, even on the human plane. All over India there were men and women who were with him, who shared his faith in non-violence as "a passion of the soul", and believed in the possibility of a human comradeship which could transcend sectarian divisions. When they asked how they could help him Gandhi answered, as he had answered during the Noakhali crisis of 1946: "Stay where you are, do whatever you can

there. Non-violence is needed everywhere." So Marjorie had returned from Calcutta to Madras, where she had responsibilities to discharge before she was free to go to Sevagram.

When partition had been decided on, some friends who lived in the future Pakistan areas asked Gandhi whether they should migrate to Indian territory. "No," he replied. "Remain in your own homes. Make yourselves useful there, as loyal citizens of Pakistan." For, once partition had come about, Gandhi accepted it (as Rajaji did) as a fact not to be undone but to be transformed for good. "The partition of India has been decided on," he said, "and it is true that I am unhappy about it. But it is no use crying over spilt milk. I have never been defeated in spirit. The real day of rejoicing will be when Hindus and Muslims live as brothers, even though in two Dominions."[1]

After the partition had taken place Gandhi continued to speak in the same vein. "I am a born fighter who does not know failure. Partition is a fact... but it is always possible by correct conduct to lessen the evil, even to bring good out of evil — to transform it."[2]

In mid-September, the day when it would be possible to rejoice in such a transformation was still far away. When Jehangir reached Delhi he found Gandhi grave and stern. He received Jehangir with his customary friendly pat on the back; but when Jehangir burst out "Bapu, India is divided!" he responded almost brusquely: "Yes, but this is no time for talk. The house is on fire. A good soldier of peace will set to work to put out the flames, he won't sit discussing who is responsible. Jehangir, you believe in Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. Are you ready to die for your beliefs?"

"I am ready to do whatever you wish," Jehangir replied. "It does not matter one iota to India whether I live or die. I am here to do anything I can."

"Then go to Sabzimandi," said Gandhi. "Take some Muslim friends along with you if you can, and try to ensure that there is no more shooting, either by the police or by anyone else." He then added a warning, using the phrase he had used at their first meeting, and which now had an immediate poignancy: "Jehangir, I have nothing to offer you but tears of blood. But don't let yourself be overcome by your emotions. Your reason must be your guiding star."

The situation in Sabzimandi was happily soon brought under control. Volunteers came forward to help, both Muslim and Hindu. Hindus visited the Muslim areas, and assured the men that they need have no fears for the safety of their women folk. Muslims did the same in the Hindu areas. Sabzimandi began to return to normal. But in one part of Delhi or another passions were continually being re-kindled by the burning anger of the refugees from divided Punjab, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim alike, who were unable either to forget or forgive the terrible things they had suffered. In the Purana Qila* there was a vast camp of uprooted Muslim families, from Delhi itself and from the region of the eastern Punjab. Some of them had seen their closest kin dragged from the refugee trains, speared and murdered before their eyes.

Gandhi visited the camp, alone, unarmed, unprotected. The angry Muslims found themselves face to face with the man whom political propaganda had named the chief "enemy of Islam" in India. What they now saw was a man who approached them as human beings, who showed a responsible concern for their human needs, who treated them as individual men and women, not merely as "a refugee problem". Here was no "enemy of Islam". It was obvious that Gandhi was a genuine friend, and that he was prepared to risk his life in their defence. Unarmed truth confronted the lies of propaganda, and won the day.

---

* *Purana Qila*: old fort, the great ruined fort from which Delhi had been ruled before the present Red Fort was built by the Moguls.

Near Humayun's tomb there was another camp of refugees. These were Meo Muslims from Rajasthan, about one thousand strong. Their community, native to the Punjab-Rajasthan border regions, had embraced Islam many centuries before, and had lived peacefully ever since with their Hindu neighbours. They were a people of fine physique, toughened by the rugged conditions in which they lived, but they too had been caught up in the universal unreasoning panic. They had decided reluctantly to leave their ancestral homes and emigrate to Pakistan, and they came to Gandhi to ask for his blessing on their journey.

Gandhi received them very warmly, but he tried his best to persuade them to return home. "In my view," he told their leaders, "you are making a grave mistake; to emigrate will only add to your misery. I think that you should remain in your homeland, and in that case I will give you my blessing most willingly. You have a right to remain, and if I were the only Hindu left in India I would insist that you should have your rights. Stay in your own homes, and live and flourish as you have always done alongside your brothers of other religions." To Gandhi's great regret the Meos did not feel able to follow this advice. The impact of the violence they had seen was too strong, and they decided to go on to Pakistan.

Jehangir's next assignment was in Panipat. Gandhi was receiving a continuous stream of letters and telegrams from its Muslim citizens, followed up by appeals that he should go there in person to protect them. "You want us Muslims to stay in India," they said, "and we also want to stay. Please come and help us to stay." The Muslims of Delhi, however, were equally determined that Gandhi must remain in Delhi. He therefore sent Jehangir and Dinshaw to Panipat on his behalf. "Go and see what the situation is," he said. "If you think it is necessary for me to come send me word, and I will see if I can manage it."

In Panipat Hindus and Muslims had lived side by side for centuries, and were partners in its economic life. The town made razais, the warm cotton quilts which are so widely used in winter throughout northern India. Muslim craftsmen made the quilts, while Hindus produced and processed the cotton. They had other crafts also of great beauty. The Muslims had no wish to leave their homes, and greatly resented the attempts which were being made to force them to do so. Unfortunately, Panipat had been selected as the site for an emergency refugee camp for Sikhs from Pakistan; refugee trains were being unloaded there, and some twenty thousand embittered people were camped outside the town. The Sikhs, seething with rage at the attacks made upon them as they left Pakistan, took revenge on the innocent Muslim population of Panipat. They murdered men, they raped women, they did not spare even children. The very railway platform was a scene of terror — unbelievable, except for those who actually witnessed it, as Jehangir and Dinshaw now did.

Panipat was not the only railway station where "unbelievable" scenes were enacted during those terrible months. Delhi was another. Jullundur, where there was another refugee camp, was a third. At Jullundur, the popular young Sikh in charge of the refugee camp was sitting in his office one day when a man dashed in, breathlessly gasping that a Muslim traveller had been dragged out of a railway train by some toughs who were bent on murdering him. The toughs were a notorious gang, and the young Sikh dashed to the rescue, without stopping even to put on his turban. He intercepted them, and rescued the Muslim. He asked no questions, but put the traveller at once in charge of a military officer, who sent him safely on his journey. The Muslim whose life was thus saved was Dr. Zakir Husain, later to be President of India; the young Sikh was Darbara Singh, later to be Chief Minister of the Punjab. Many other incidents, alas, ended less happily.

In Panipat, Dinshaw and Jehangir decided that Gandhi must be sent for. He answered the call and came the following day, bringing with him Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. A meeting was arranged in the market place. The Sikhs came, the men full of anger, bringing the knives, revolvers and other weapons which some of them had succeeded in wresting from those who attacked them. Sikh women came, in a wretched state of body and mind, to tell Gandhi, their "Bapu", what they had endured. The Muslims also came, bitterly resentful that they and their women and children should be made to suffer for wrongs in which they had had no part. Gandhi listened to them all, his eyes and his whole manner eloquent of his distress. He tried to reason, to point out that violence and counter-violence solved no problems; but it seemed that his words carried no weight now. Angry refugees shouted at him to retire to the Himalayas. "My Himalayas are here," he replied, but such experiences made him feel, as he said, like "a spent bullet".[3]

While the meeting was still in progress a station-wagon drove up, and a number of Muslims emerged. Before anyone had time to realise who they were they had laid hold of Gandhi and lifted him bodily into their vehicle. "We are taking him right back to Delhi," they announced. "Without him there will be a massacre of Muslims there." In those days it might truly have been said that Gandhi constituted a "one-man boundary force" not only on India's eastern borders but on her north-western borders also.

Gandhi did not resist being "kidnapped". "You stay on here," he said to Dinshaw and Jehangir, "and send for me again if things get worse." They stayed, but a few days later, feeling that they had come to the end of their own resources, they decided to go back to Delhi and ask for further guidance. "There is not much that I can say," was Gandhi's reply, "except that as non-violent soldiers you must not abandon your post. You must face whatsoever comes, and I can only tell you that I will do the same. We are all on the battle-field today, and just now my post must be in Delhi."

What Gandhi's presence in Delhi meant to Indian leaders during those months was described by Nehru in a Convocation Address in December 1947: "Freedom came to us, our long-sought freedom. But immediately afterwards horror piled on horror. The lights seemed to go out. But one bright flame continued to burn, and looking at that pure flame, strength and hope returned to us... During the past four months, in a dissolving world, he has been a rock of purpose and a lighthouse of truth."

During those first days of Independence the Indian and Pakistani armies were towers of strength both to their governments and to their non-violent counterparts. For many of their officers and men, the partition of the country had been "the heart-break of heart-breaks". General Claude Auchinleck, whose duty it was to carry out the division of his army between India and Pakistan, writes of the trauma of the experience. "What it meant was that regiments like my own, half Hindu and half Muslim, were just torn apart — and they wept on each others' shoulders when it happened... You felt your life-work would be finished when what you had been working at all along was just torn in two pieces, literally at the stroke of a pen."[4] The army officers of the two new Dominions had lived and worked together as comrades; they knew, respected and liked one another, and they became their governments' most effective liaison officers. In a spirit of mutual cooperation and goodwill they coped with the immense problems of the migration of population, and did all they could to ensure order and to protect the refugee trains.

Gandhi the man of non-violence did not find this strange. We have seen how he admired the military virtues, and envisaged his Shanti Sena as an army, trained and disciplined and working under recognised authority. On Subhash Bose's birthday (23rd January 1948) he said nothing about his own differences with Subhash, but he paid a warm tribute to the Indian National Army for demonstrating how an all-India unity and loyalty might be strengthened

and enriched by the many differences of province and religion within its ranks. Gandhi thought of those who worked with him during the last six months of his life as soldiers of his own non-violent army; Jehangir himself found that his own early training in boxing, that is, in the disciplined and restrained use of physical force, was in fact an admirable preparation for disciplined non-violence.

But fully as Gandhi was pledged to non-violence for himself, what he worked and pleaded for with the general public was the acceptance of the ordinary norms of civil order and good citizenship. Immediately after Independence he made his position very clear: "Now that the struggle for Pakistan and Akhand Hindustan is over, we must settle down to the reality. Hindus and Muslims have to live together as common citizens, and we have to try to turn every citizen into a worthy member of either State... There is neither excuse nor extenuation for (the behaviour of) the majority in Pakistan or in Hindustan. If the Hindu majority in India treasures its religion and duty, it will be just at all costs. The proper thing is for each majority to do its duty in all humility, irrespective of what the other majority does in the other State. The minorities must be made to feel that they are valued citizens, equally with the majority... Hindustan belongs to all who are born and bred here, whatever their religion."[5]

The most urgent immediate requirement of good citizenship was to put an end to the vicious circle of private revenge and counter-revenge. Gandhi urged again and again that no one, however greatly wronged, should take the law into his own hands, for then justice and fair dealing would be replaced by the blood-feud. He squarely challenged India's majorities with their failure to set the example: "I may be pardoned for putting the first blame on the Hindus and Sikhs. Could they not be men enough to stem the tide?" Muslims on one side, Sikhs on the other, were both uttering threats against the Boundary Commission which was delimiting the dis-

puted border, in case its findings did not accord with their own wishes. "That is dishonourable," declared Gandhi. "Having agreed to arbitration, both sides must abide by the decision."

The arrogance of the majority, the readiness to treat India's Muslim minority as aliens without rights, was seen in the shameful sporadic violence that still continued — as in October, when a brave and conscientious Muslim Health Officer was murdered on duty in the city of Delhi. It was seen, even before partition had actually taken place, in the wide-spread advocacy in India of a narrow Hindu chauvinism which regarded all Muslims indiscriminately as disloyal to India and enemies of the State. Against this arrogance and prejudice, in his prayer-speeches and in the pages of *Harijan*, Gandhi fought with all the eloquence at his command. "Mr. Jinnah has rendered a disservice to India," he wrote on July 6, 1947, "by calling Hindus 'our enemies'. Let him whom the cap fits wear it. I plead with the Hindus *not* to wear the cap, to prove themselves not the enemies of Islam but its friends."

But the voices of dissent grew louder: "*All* Muslims are traitors!" Gandhi tried to reason with them, to shame them. Who were the traitors, he asked, Dr. Zakir Husain, or those who had made the cowardly, murderous attack on him at Jullundur? Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, or those who mocked and insulted him for his loyalty to the principle of the "secular" State? Had Hakim Ajmal Khan been a traitor? He had given the best of his skill to the treatment of the very poor; he had made no distinction of creed, and thousands of poor Hindus in Delhi had benefited from his devotion. When he died in 1927 Gandhi had declared that his best memorial would be a lasting brotherhood between the two communities. The prospects had then seemed bright. Where was that brotherhood now? Was it not a disgrace to Delhi that the daughter of that great freedom fighter Dr. Ansari should have to live in a hotel, because she and her husband were not secure from attack in their own home?

Gandhi was deeply hurt when Hindu fanatics of this type objected to the recitation of the Quran at his prayer meetings. "If even one person feels like that, I can read neither Quran nor Gita," he answered, and the prayers ended in silence. But some of the more subtle manifestations of this spirit of intolerance were perhaps more harmful in the long run. In the Constituent Assembly a proposal was made that India's national language should not be Hindustani, but Hindi. In July 1947 Dadabhai Naoroji's granddaughter Perinben Captain wrote to Gandhi about this move. Even some Congressmen, she said, had become so blinded by passion and hatred that they had lost their vision of a truly united country. Gandhi printed her letter in *Harijan*, along with his reply. "Let the Hindus disprove by their conduct," he wrote, "the claim that we, the Hindus and Muslims of India, are not one nation but two. Neither Hindi highly sanskritised nor Urdu highly persianised, can ever be the link between us. Hindustani is the link, for it is the natural fusion of the two."* This natural synthesis, he pointed out, is simple, practical and unpretentious; it is widely spoken, and still more widely understood, and there are already many people who know and use both the traditional scripts in which it is written. To encourage as many Indians as possible to learn the language he arranged for a simple Hindustani dictionary to be published in weekly instalments in *Harijan*; simple Hindustani equivalents of common English words were printed in both the Nagari and the Persian scripts.

A cheap, reliable dictionary of this kind would still be very useful in India where our linguistic fanatics still exclude from their dictionaries any word, however commonly used, which they can convict of the crime of having an Urdu or Arabic origin. As C.F. Andrews pointed out long ago, ordinary people put up no customs

---

* Hindi in a number of local forms is spoken over a wide area of North India, and written in a script (nagari) derived from Sanskrit. Urdu. the "camp" language of the Delhi area, is strongly influenced by the Persian of the Moghul Court. Hindustani derives from both.

barriers on the frontiers of their speech; a simple, useful word has no need of a passport, no matter where it comes from.

In these matters laughter may be more effective than argument. Marjorie's students in Sevagram dealt with these so-called "purist" tendencies by gentle, kindly ridicule. Their Hindustani *was* simple and practical, as it needed to be, to help students from every corner of India to communicate with one another. One day in class, however, a student from a Hindi-speaking area read his monthly work report to the community in high-flown and incomprehensible sanskritised Hindi. There was a puzzled silence, but no open protest, and the chairman called on the next speaker. A student from Hyderabad came forward, and solemnly began to deliver *his* report in deliberately incomprehensible persianised Urdu. As the flowery periods rolled out, the joke caught on; soon the whole class was rocking with laughter, and the speaker relaxed his artificial solemnity and joined in. The point was made, and not forgotten.

Even more painful to Gandhi were proposals which, if accepted, would tend to compel all citizens to conform to orthodox Hindu custom. In 1946, when serious food shortages seemed likely, Gandhi had urged that measures should be taken to promote the wider use of fish, which is of course a normal article of diet in India's coastal and riverine areas. The orthodox objected; fish-eaters, they said, commit violence. Gandhi's reply was spirited: "Yes, they do commit violence. And so do those who eat vegetables. This kind of violence is inherent in all embodied life. But the man who coerces another *not* to eat fish commits more violence than the man who eats it. *Coercion is deliberate violence, coercion is inhuman...* Meat-eating is a sin for me. But for another person who has always eaten meat and never seen anything wrong in it, it would be a sin to give it up simply in order to copy me."[6]

Even before independence, many orthodox Hindus began declaring that the future Indian Union should impose a legal prohibi-

tion on cow-slaughter. Here was another matter which smacked of coercion, and Gandhi took it up. "Hindu religion prohibits cow-slaughter for Hindus, not for the world," he said. "Religious prohibition comes from within. Any imposition from without means compulsion. Hindu law cannot be imposed on non-Hindus." But the pressure continued, and Gandhi returned to the subject in his prayer-speech on November 4, 1947: "Is the Union to be a theocratic State, and are the tenets of Hinduism to be imposed on non-Hindus? I hope not. The Indian Union would then cease to be a land of hope and promise to which the races of Asia and Africa, indeed of the whole world, may look. The world expects from India, whether as the Union or as Pakistan, not littleness and fanaticism but greatness and goodness."

When Gandhi spoke, nearly forty years ago, the issue of "cow-slaughter" had not assumed the serious economic dimensions of our modern beef-export trade. The pressure came from those who, often sub-consciously, thought of the Union of India as a "Hindu" state; their attitude was coloured by hostility towards groups such as Muslims and Christians whose religious traditions did not forbid beef-eating. Gandhi declared that it was "gross ignorance" to blame Muslims for cow-slaughter,[7] and he was right. Forty years earlier Mujibur Rahman, a nationalist Muslim of Bengal, had protested in the *Hindustan Review* in 1908 against the hypocrisy of Hindu landlords who dealt harshly with their poor Muslim tenants for killing one calf a year for Bakr-Id, and were silent about "the slaughter of thousands by professional butchers in every town". Rabindranath Tagore backed him up; this is the sort of thing, he said, which turns so many nationalist Muslims into communalists.

Gandhi made another point in the same speech. "It is the Hindus," he said, "who by their ill-treatment kill the cow by inches. A slow death by torture is far worse than outright killing."[7] This was a principle to which he appealed again and again. As he had told the people of Midnapur, "killing may be the cleanest form of vio-

lence" — there were much worse and more degrading forms of cruelty inflicted both on human beings and on beasts. On the famous and controversial occasion when Gandhi had sanctioned the killing of a sick and suffering calf by a painless lethal injection, he was acting on this principle. He would have felt nothing but respect for those North American Indian peoples who lived by hunting bison, but killed *only* to satisfy their hunger, and then took the utmost care to see that no part of the carcass should be wasted, out of respect for the life which their own need had obliged them to destroy. Theirs was the violence which "is inherent in all embodied life"; their inward attitude of reverence for life was in the spirit of non-violence.

But in Delhi, in January 1948, fanaticism and resentment smouldered on — resentment against Gandhi's steady friendliness towards "Muslim traitors", and a dark fanaticism of spirit which showed itself that month in renewed incidents of murderous communal violence. Gandhi felt compelled to undertake another fast, to be continued indefinitely "until such time as sanity returns to Delhi". The fast began on January 13th. Shocked and shamed, the people of Delhi responded, as the people of Calcutta had done in the previous September, and on January 18 Gandhi felt able to bring the fast to an end. He had become very weak, but there was no interruption in his daily prayer messages; during the days of the fast he continued to be present at the regular public prayers, and when he became too weak to speak himself his message was read on his behalf. On the evening of January 18, when the fast had been broken, his words rang with a new hope: "I remember to have read, on the gate of the Delhi or the Agra Fort — I forget which — when I visited them in 1896, a verse which reads, 'If there is a Paradise on earth, it is here, it is here.' That Fort, with all its magnificence, was no Paradise in my estimation. But I would love to see that verse inscribed with justice on all the gates of Pakistan. Before I knew anything of politics, when I was only a boy of twelve, I dreamed the dream of communal unity of the heart. Now in the

evening of my life I shall jump like a child to feel that the dream has been realised."

Nevertheless Jehangir was filled with foreboding, as he had been for months. Rajaji had commented in Calcutta in September that "Bapu is safer now in the hands of the Muslims than in those of the Hindus". Jehangir shared his misgivings. "One day they will murder you," he had burst out to Gandhi on one occasion. He never forgot the deep conviction of Gandhi's reply: "Jehangir, when my time comes I will go. When that will be is for Providence to decide. No human being has the power either to shorten or to lengthen my life by a single second."

Only two days after the fast was broken a smoke-bomb exploded in Gandhi's prayer meeting: People began to panic, but Gandhi succeeded in calming them, and the meeting quietly continued. The police outside caught the culprit, one Madanlal, and found a hand-grenade in his pocket. Apparently he had planned to throw it at Gandhi in the confusion which he had expected the smoke-bomb to create.

Gandhi did not allow the incident to deflect him from his path. In spite of it, he felt that the fires which had raged in Delhi were now under control. "I have done my work in Delhi," he said to Jehangir. "Now I must go to Pakistan and try to bring about heart-unity there."

Chapter XII
Peace with Pakistan: 1947-48

As we have seen, once the creation of Pakistan had been decided, Gandhi accepted it as a fact not to be overthrown but to be transformed for good. He was alert to everything which might promote or prevent a happy relationship between the two Dominions.

One such matter was the integration of the Princely States into the new regimes. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel showed great political wisdom and skill in working out just and equitable instruments of accession for those States which opted for the Indian Union, and in most cases the process of integration went forward smoothly. There were, however, a few exceptions. One of them was Junagadh in Kathiawad, whose population was 82% Hindu but which was ruled by a Muslim Nawab. Without consulting either his own people or the other Kathiawad States he decided to accede to Pakistan. After some weeks of delay Pakistan accepted the accession, but two of Junagadh's vassal States, Mangrol and Baberiawad, refused to be a party to it. Upon this the Nawab sent his troops to enforce their obedience.

The result was a "People's Movement", led by one of Gandhi's nephews, Samaldas Gandhi, which set up Provisional

Government. The Nawab abandoned his State and withdrew to Pakistan, and on November 8th, the Diwan invited the Indian Government to take over the administration. This was done, and the Regional Commissioner in Rajkot took charge of Junagadh's affairs. Rajkot, and all the other Kathiawad States, had already acceded to India.

Gandhi naturally followed the course of events as closely as he could, perhaps with some regret that Samaldas had not been able to win over the Nawab. He was receiving telegrams from the minority Muslim community in Junagadh begging for his protection. Would a referendum help? he wondered. Early in December he asked Jehangir and Dinshaw Mehta, who belonged to neither community, to go and study the situation for themselves. They spent more than half the month in doing so, but thinking that it might be impolitic to say they had come on Gandhi's behalf, they represented themselves as independent observers. Very few people believed them, however; Dinshaw's position as Gandhi's medical adviser was too well known!

They found that both Hindus and Muslims were demoralised. Some of the Hindus, who had suffered indignities under the Nawab, had taken refuge in neighbouring States as soon as his accession to Pakistan was announced. Some of the Muslims, on the other hand, had a guilty conscience, and were afraid of "reprisals" by the Hindu majority. Neither group was able to see things in proportion, and various criminal elements got an opportunity to make capital out of their mutual fears and suspicions. A colony of wealthy Muslim merchants at Kuttiana, for example, had employed a gang of dacoits to "defend" them against the popular movement for freedom. Other local disturbances of the peace had been provoked by the misdeeds of a particular Sub-Inspector of Police.

The two observers, who were greatly helped by U.N. Dhebar, the Congress leader from Rajkot, soon came to the conclusion that

the overall situation was not so serious as had been reported, that the Muslim community by and large was well protected, and that undue importance should not be given to the telegrams which they had sent, and which they themselves now admitted to have been exaggerated. They were recovering confidence, supporting Samaldas Gandhi, and declaring that they wished to be a part of the Indian Union.

This report went to Gandhi, recommending that there was no need for a referendum or any other form of outside interference. Two things, said the observers, would help to promote the growth of confidence: visits to the State by disinterested friends, especially women, and the institution of democratic reforms by liberal States like Jamnagar, whose example would be imitated by its neighbours.

During the past months Gandhi's thought had turned often to Pakistan itself; he was eager to pay a visit of goodwill to the regions from which partition had cut him off, but which he regarded as still a part of his homeland. He put out feelers, and little more than a week after Dinshaw and Jehangir had returned from Junagadh he sent them to Karachi, then the interim capital of Pakistan, to make arrangements for his visit. They left Bombay by sea on January 7th, and after calling at Veraval and Cutch-Mandvi, where hundreds of Muslim refugees bound for Karachi boarded the ship, they dropped anchor outside Karachi on the 10th. There was a long delay; they had to wait their turn for a pilot with other shipping, but they finally docked late in the evening.

Karachi was under curfew; there had been an outbreak of communal violence a few days before, and the two travellers were uncertain what to do. The harbour area was full of troops, and in a huge shed near the docks were housed hundreds of refugees, both emigrating Hindus and immigrating Muslims. Separate areas had been demarcated for the two communities, and along the boundary between them two taps had been installed, one for each group. But

the water supply was inadequate, and bitter disputes were going on around the taps. While Dinshaw telephoned one of his former patients, now a highly-placed Pakistan official, to help them to find accommodation, Jehangir got permission from the police to try to cool the refugees' inflamed tempers. It was not easy, but finally he managed to quieten the disputants, and get them to agree to take turns at the taps in an orderly way. No sooner was the matter settled than a police jeep arrived in response to Dinshaw's call and took them to the Palace Hotel to spend the night.

Next morning the two emissaries plunged into negotiations, in which Sri Prakasa, the Indian High Commissioner, along with Shaheed Suhrawardy, Gandhi's recent partner in the Calcutta peacemaking, played an active role. Another helper was Nazir Ahmed, who had been Jehangir's Cambridge contemporary and friend. He gave them a warm welcome. "You want peace and so do we," he said, "I'll help you." Ghulam Mahommed, the Finance Minister, whom Jehangir had also met in earlier days, was equally friendly. He wanted to know who had sent them — the Government of India or Gandhi personally. They explained that they were Gandhi's personal messengers and had no authority to represent the Government of India.

Some useful talks followed — which included other members of the Cabinet, Mandal, Abdul Rab Nishtar and Fazli Rahaman. Their response to Gandhi's initiative was positive; they emphasized Pakistan's desire for peace; they wanted India to be a friendly, prosperous neighbour. They pleaded for an end to the exchange of irresponsible, unverified accusations, in the press and elsewhere, which embittered the majorities on both sides and demoralised the minorities. The outcome was a suggestion that with the consent of both cabinets all matters of dispute between the two Dominions and all complaints about the treatment of their minorities might be brought before a tribunal, possibly consisting of the two premiers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan, whose decisions should

be respected and implemented. Minorities in both countries must feel assured that their lives and property would be secure and their right to religious and cultural freedom fully recognized.

A most valuable part in these informal talks was played by Jamshed Mehta, a Karachi citizen who was a convinced follower of Gandhi and a habitual wearer of the homespun *khadi* cloth. When partition was declared he had remained in his own home as a loyal citizen of the new State. During the last five months in Karachi he had done his utmost to keep the peace. He knew the conditions in the refugee camps intimately, and met Jinnah every day to keep him in touch with their problems; in dealing with them he was Jinnah's right-hand man. "I know he's a Gandhian at heart," Jinnah would say wryly, "but I can't do without him!" Jamshed had had a distinctive horn fixed to his car, so that anyone who was in need of his help could recognize it, stop the car and claim his attention. He lived in an old-fashioned bungalow with a large compound. The whole compound, the verandahs of the house and all available corners were crammed with refugees — Hindus waiting for a ship to India, Muslims newly arrived — every family with a tragic story to tell.

Jamshed was the first person Dinshaw and Jehangir met when they arrived, and during the following week he became their go-between. He knew everyone, and had ready access to all the various departments of government as well as to Jinnah himself.

Dinshaw and Jehangir were therefore in Karachi when Gandhi felt compelled to undertake his Delhi fast. The news was unexpected, and it came as a disturbing shock. They wondered anxiously whether there was anything they could do to help; Gandhi sent them a wire asking them to continue their work, remembering that he himself was "in God's hands". They finally approached Jinnah, and suggested that a message from him, assuring Gandhi of his cooperation in putting an end to the violence, might induce

Gandhi to terminate the fast. Jinnah agreed, and a telegram was drafted, urging Gandhi "to live and work for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity in the two Dominions", and promising that Jinnah would do all he could to promote the cause. The telegram was duly handed over to the Indian High Commissioner, Sri Prakasa — the only channel through which it could then be sent; the gist of its message of goodwill was also conveyed to Gandhi by the Pakistan High Commissioner in Delhi, who called on him during the fast.

These friendly gestures from Pakistan were matched on January 16 by a generous decision of the Government of India. Late in November there had been discussions between the two Governments with regard to outstanding problems, such as Junagadh, Kashmir, and the share of India's pre-partition assets which was still due to Pakistan. The talks had gone well, and agreement was reached about the financial settlement; it was not immediately published however, as the Indian negotiators thought that it should form a part of a general settlement of all issues.

Before the next round of talks, however, the terms of the financial agreement were published in the Pakistan press. The Indian leaders took exception to this, and relationships deteriorated; each side felt that the other was using the financial issue to exercise unfair pressure. On January 12th, in a long press statement, Vallabhbhai Patel had reiterated that the financial agreement could only be carried out as part of a "package deal". Only four days later, in the context of Gandhi's fast, this policy was reversed; on the 16th it was announced that the money due to Pakistan would be paid immediately, in order to allay ill-will and suspicion and support Gandhi's efforts towards peace.[1]

Gandhi welcomed the Government's decision, and in his prayer-speech that evening he commended the courage and large-heartedness it had shown. But he also made it clear that neither this action, nor the friendly messages from Pakistan, were sufficient to

make him break his fast. His challenge was not to the two governments, but to the citizens of Delhi. As we have already seen, the citizens of Delhi responded; on the 18th, representatives of all the warring groups brought Gandhi a written pledge that violence in Delhi would cease and that they would do their utmost to bring peace throughout India.

The same evening, January 18th, Dinshaw and Jehangir returned to Delhi, and had a brief meeting with Gandhi that very night. They told Gandhi how much the Government of Pakistan had appreciated his action in choosing as his messengers men who themselves were neither Hindus nor Muslims; it had increased their confidence in Gandhi's goodwill.

Jamshed Mehta had accompanied them to Delhi on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, and in the further discussion which took place the next day he explained to Gandhi the conditions on which Jinnah was prepared to go ahead with arrangements for his visit. Gandhi should ask the people of India and the members of the Indian government to accept the fact of partition as settled, and to refrain from thinking and talking in terms of a possible re-union of the two Dominions. He should also use his influence to get the financial agreement fulfilled, so that further agreements might be embarked upon in a friendly spirit to the mutual benefit of both countries. Neither condition presented any difficulty; Gandhi never spoke in terms of re-union but of peace and good-will, and the financial questions had been settled in principle two days earlier.

That evening, when Nehru came to see him, Gandhi showed him the written report of the conversations in Karachi. The next day, the 20th, the emissaries met both Gandhi and Nehru again, Pakistan's assets were released, and it was decided that the negotiators should return to Karachi the next morning to work out the necessary details. That evening, the 20th, the smoke-bomb exploded in Gandhi's prayer-meeting, but he insisted that this incident should

not interfere with their arrangements. "Go back to Karachi tomorrow, as you have planned," he said.

In Karachi, Dinshaw and Jehangir were welcomed as before, and they began to discuss with Pakistani leaders the actual dates and plans for Gandhi's visit. The Pakistan Cabinet and officials felt, very reasonably from their point of view, that they must be allowed to give Gandhi police protection and, if they felt it to be necessary, to use the army. Dinshaw and Jehangir understood their position, but they knew that Gandhi might object; he had never agreed to police protection in Delhi. There was nothing to be done but to go back to Delhi and consult him, and this they did.

Jehangir explained Pakistan's position. "I have provisionally agreed to this on your behalf," he said. "I do not think we can make progress on any other terms. And you have told us yourself, Bapu, that one cannot go as a guest to another man's house and at the same time dictate one's own terms to him."*

Gandhi protested: "I don't agree that I am going into another man's house," he said. "Karachi is as much my home as Delhi; it is not a foreign country to me." "Whatever we may feel, it is now a foreign country," argued Jehangir. "Partition has happened, and we have to accept the consequences." Jamshed Mehta, who had once more accompanied them, backed up Jehangir's arguments in forcible language, and his voice carried weight. "Let it be," said Gandhi at last. "I do not wish for any 'protection', and I do not agree with Jehangir in this matter. But I do want to go to Pakistan, and I have made Jehangir my emissary in the matter. So I should support him. I will accept his decision, even though I do not share his view."

---

* See, for example, Gandhi's comment when he was Jehangir's guest at Juhu, as described in Chapter VI.

By the 27th, Jamshed and the two intermediaries were back in Karachi. It seemed that all hurdles had now been overcome and that the way forward was clear. Tentative dates for Gandhi's arrival were fixed — February 8th or 9th. In Delhi, Gandhi was visited by a Pakistani Muslim who painted an enthusiastic word-picture of "a fifty-mile procession of Hindus returning to Pakistan with Gandhi himself at the head". The idea delighted Gandhi.[2] Better days, it seemed, were about to dawn.

And then, on the 30th evening, the blow fell. "The true patriotism fell beneath the blow of the false, and the apostle of unity by the-hand of the sower of division."[3]

Himself weeping openly and unashamedly, Abdul Rab Nishtar arranged for Gandhi's two stricken friends to get back to Delhi by the first available plane. Delhi airport was in confusion, but at last they found a taxi and drove to Birla House. It was shrouded in gloom, and surrounded by immense crowds of silent, weeping people. Vallabhbhai Patel, his face a mask of grief, was seated at the door of Gandhi's room; he motioned them in. There lay the still, cold body, yet in spite of it, in spite of the wailing and moaning around, it still seemed inconceivable that Gandhi should be dead.

The room was full of people, people who had grown to know and love one another through their allegiance to Gandhi and their participation in his programmes. Among them was Thakkar Bapa; none mourned more deeply than he. "What will become of India," he lamented, "left without her leader?" Jehangir tried to comfort him. "You yourself must take up the task," he urged. "No one is so well fitted as you are to keep Bapu's real teachings before the people. You must shoulder the burden." "I shall do all I can", he said. "But I am an old man and I do not think I have many years ahead of me. And I am no politician."

After arrangements had been made for the weeping crowds to have *darshan* of their leader's body, it was handed over to the army for protection and conveyance to the site of cremation. This decision was much criticised, but it is doubtful whether Gandhi himself would have been among the critics. We have seen how he admired the military virtues, and many of his friends were grateful for the dignity and discipline with which his last journey was conducted. They followed the slow-moving carriage on foot, while lakhs of people, men, women and children, lined the route. Men sobbed or were silent. Vallabhbhai was seated by the body; the watching people showered flowers upon it, and then closed in and followed behind. It took two full hours to reach Rajghat, but at last all was ready for the final rites. As the funeral pyre was lit, there were moving cries; *Mahatma Gandhi zindabad*! *Mahatma Gandhi amar ho*!* On a raised platform, Jawaharlal Nehru stood and watched the flames.

As Gandhi had belonged to the whole of India it was decided that portions of the ashes should be immersed in every part of the country. One portion was allocated to Sabarmati, and Jehangir with Vithalbhai Jhaveri had the moving experience of acting as escort. They flew to Ahmedabad via Baroda (Vadodara). There the two escorts remained seated by the urn as a long line of mourners filed through the plane to pay their respects. At Ahmedabad they handed over their precious charge to Narharibhai Parikh of the Sabarmati Ashram; the ashes were immersed with much devotion in the Sabarmati river.

The ashes contained in the main urn were to be immersed at the Sangam, the sacred confluence where the waters of Ganga and Yamuna meet below Allahabad. The immersion, by ancient Indian custom, took place on the thirteenth day, the 12th February. A railway train, the *Asthi* Special,** was made ready to carry the urn

---

* Long live Mahatma Gandhi! May he be immortal!

** *Asthi* — remains in the form of ashes and bones after cremation of the body.

from Delhi to Allahabad in a special carriage where it could be seen by the people who assembled at the railway stations along the route.

Jehangir was among the mourners who travelled by the train in the early morning darkness of February 11th, at the hour when Gandhi in his life-time would have been rising for morning prayer. He drove from Birla House to the ceremonial platform at New Delhi railway station with the urn at his side. There, Jawaharlal received it from him and placed it on the train.

At dawn the train moved out, a train of the old Indian third-class coaches such as Gandhi had always used. At every halt, crowds waited for darshan. At Kanpur, a group of Christians sang Gandhi's favourite hymn, *Lead, kindly Light*. At other stations Hindus chanted the *Gita*, Muslims the *Quran*. On the train itself Dinshaw recited the *Avesta*. At the Sangam next morning, Gandhi's son Ramdas performed the immersion ceremony.

Five months, almost to the day, have gone by since Gandhi returned from Bengal to Delhi — five months of patient labour, quiet courage, spontaneous and complete self-giving. The work is done, the body laid aside; its ashes mingle with the waters that flow, smooth and strong, back to Bengal and the sea. For Gandhi, as for Tagore,

"In front lies the ocean of peace".

Epilogue
Gandhi's Legacy: The Gift of the Fight

"No truly great man has to be made known. When the time comes, Gandhi will be known, for the world needs him and his message."

— Rabindranath Tagore, 1920*

"The world can only survive through non-violence. The world needs Gandhi's message of love and peace more today than it ever did before."

— Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 1985**

Let us now go back to the scene described in our first chapter, when Tagore in 1932 spoke of the meaning of Gandhi's fast on behalf of the despised, excluded "untouchables". For Tagore, Gandhi's action was an ultimatum — addressed to us all; it was also a fight — to which we are all summoned. Paradoxical as it may seem, Gandhi the "apostle of non-violence" described himself as "a born fighter"; his "peace army" the Shanti Sena was conceived as a fighting force; his legacy to India and the world is, in Tagore's words, his "gift of the fight".

The battle was not merely or chiefly against British rule. "I am not interested," Gandhi had written, "in freeing India merely from the British yoke; I am bent on freeing India from any yoke whatsoever".[1] More than twenty years later, when "the British yoke" was

---

* Interview given to the journalist S.K. Roy in USA.

** Message to his biographer, Eknath Easwaran, (*A Man to Match his Mountains*).

finally thrown off, he commented that "complete independence is still far away".[2] He knew the truth of the warning which Tagore had uttered more than a quarter of a century earlier: "Alien government is a veritable chameleon; today it is in the guise of the British; tomorrow or the next day it may take the shape of our own countrymen."[3] He had therefore hoped and planned that after political independence had been achieved he would return to Sabarmati and continue the "fight" from there. It would, he knew, be a long struggle, and victory would come only when "every one of India's 700,000 villages" was able to enjoy *real* freedom to direct its own life, and to resist the encroachment of any "alien government" whatsoever on its people's right to manage their own affairs.

This was a far more radically revolutionary programme than that of national political freedom for India. It was also, as some of his more perceptive colleagues recognized, much nearer to Gandhi's own heart. One of them had commented, at the height of the Quit India movement in 1942: "Bapu, your *real* work will begin when India is free",[4] and Gandhi had agreed. True to his principle of *swadeshi* he had planned to begin this "real work" in his own native region, Gujarat, and his own chosen home, the Sabarmati Ashram. But the programme itself was not to be limited to Sabarmati or Gujarat, or even India. "If I may say so without arrogance," he wrote, "my message and my methods are indeed in their essentials for the whole world. I believe myself to be a revolutionary, a non-violent revolutionary. I am aspiring after a new order of things that will astonish the world."[5]

The task of establishing a new order of things was, in Gandhi's view, far too large to be left to a mere handful of "disciples". He had never had any use for a "Gandhian sect", and in many of his comments to us, and in our hearing, he would warn us humorously but very firmly against the ever-present temptation of the "disciple" to blind imitation of "the master". "I am really too ambitious," he wrote (and one can almost see the mischievous twinkle in his

eye) — "too ambitious to be satisfied with a sect as a following." The outward marks of discipleship — the homespun clothes, the vegetarian diet, the refusal to drink or smoke etc. — may be and sometimes are linked with a narrowly sectarian mentality which is no reflection of Gandhi's open mind and generous spirit. The new order will not be created by sectarians; it will come through those whom Srinivasa Sastri called Gandhi's "fellow-worshippers of the Truth", the "clear-eyed and courageous fellow-travellers", whether or not they use Gandhi's name or travel by exactly the same paths. The rich diversity of the human world affords many pathways to Truth and many altars at which she may be worshipped. They are all needed if the new order of things to which Gandhi aspired is ever to be brought into being.

Gandhi's magnificent vision of the new revolutionary order is summarised in the well-known paragraphs which he published in *Harijan* on 12 June 1945:

"Independence of my dream means *Rama Rajya*, the kingdom of God on earth. Politically translated, it is a perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race, creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people, justice is prompt and cheap, and there is freedom of worship, speech and the press — all this because of the self-imposed law of moral restraint.

"Such a state must be based on Truth and non-violence, and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities. In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles, till at last the whole becomes one oceanic circle whose life is shared by all the individuals who are its integral units."

This "dream" of a completely free human society, Gandhi frankly admitted, paints a picture "like Euclid's point, incapable of

being drawn by any human agency". Nevertheless he claimed that like Euclid's point it has "an imperishable value of its own" because "we must have a clear picture of what we want before we can have something approaching it." We must also have an *overall* picture of what we want, so that our struggle towards the ideal in any particular field (the abolition of the various inequalities of human status, or the establishment of freedom of speech, or speedy, even-handed justice) is carried on in ways which are in harmony with the vision of the whole. Some of the particular fields in which we ourselves have been involved have already been touched on — health, education, the development of a Shanti Sena or non-violent police, other forms of co-operative local enterprise and conciliation. In all these fields Gandhi's insights are needed now more urgently than ever. In this final chapter, however, we concentrate on the basic principles which underlie them all, and which form the core of Gandhi's challenge to the prevailing order — if "order" is the right word for the chaos of misery, violence and fear which engulfs so much of the world today. These principles are both political and religious, and the two aspects cannot be finally separated, but we will begin with the political.

Gandhi's "perfect democracy" of economic and social equality, justice and freedom is clearly much more than a system of "one man, one vote" in which the party which secures the largest number of votes forms the government. A party system, and majority rule, are regarded by most people today as the essence of democracy; that was the view of some of Gandhi's *opponents*, who advocated a "democratic" India in which Hindus would "order life by majority rule" and ignore the wishes and interests of the religious minorities. Gandhi in contrast insisted over and over again that a real democracy must accord at least equal respect to the needs and outlook of its *weaker* groups. "My notion of democracy," he wrote, "is that in it the weakest should have the same opportunities as the strongest."[6]

It is interesting that at almost exactly the same time as Gandhi published his dream of a "perfect democracy", a fellow-worshipper of the Truth, Kees Boeke of the Netherlands, also published a paper on *Democracy As It Might Be*. Democracy, he wrote, must not depend on power, "not even the power of the majority". He began by listing the weaknesses of the party system in a way that remains strikingly relevant today: "mass meetings in which primitive passions are aroused, unreliable election results, the overruling by the majority of all independent views. Strange abuses creep in. A party can obtain votes by deplorable methods; a dictator can win an 'astonishing' majority by intimidation."[7] Boeke's dream of democracy is close to Gandhi's in spirit, and we shall return to it later.

Gandhi, therefore, proposed as the first test of a genuinely democratic government that it should keep steadily in view what he called his "talisman". That is, it should consider how far any step it proposed to take would contribute to the welfare of the poorest and most helpless: "Will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually-starved millions of our countrymen? Will it restore to them control over their lives and destiny?" This control over one's own life is the essence of real freedom, and Gandhi insisted that it should be vested in the natural unit of human society, the village community. There must be no "ascending circles" which might usurp control, no pyramid of power in which the "higher" levels can *impose* their decisions on the local units without the latter's free consent and approval. This does not mean, in Gandhi's thought, a stagnant isolation; it means a radically different pattern of relationships in which the local unit, and the individual citizen, participate in "ever-widening circles" of willing and equal co-operation. One of the most important tasks which Gandhi has bequeathed to us is the working out of this new pattern, step by step, in realistic, down-to-earth ways; Kees Boeke's description of *Democracy As It Might Be* includes specific proposals about what might be done, in the

context of his own small country, and many more experiments are needed.

Gandhi's insistence that the basic political unit should be no bigger than the village is not new. He was fond of saying that "Truth and nonviolence are as old as the hills", and this particular aspect of truth was dealt with more than two thousand years ago by the Greek thinker Aristotle, who understood very clearly the effect of numbers on the work of a political community. In his treatise on *Politics* he put the matter in a nutshell: "In order to deal rightly in matters of justice and polity, and to choose the right people for office, it is necessary that the citizens should know one another, know what kind of people they are... It is not right in these matters to vote at haphazard, which is what takes place *when the population is excessive*." Aristotle's words, based on the experience of Greek city-states, also reflect the experience of countless face-to-face communities, in many parts of the world, where "the citizens know one another".

Intimate personal knowledge is the foundation of wise corporate action. It is this intimacy which enables the villagers of India's "primitive" tribal areas to "choose the right people" as village elders, and so ensure that speedy and equitable justice is done, and is seen to be done, with no legacy of resentment and ill-will. It enables them to reach united practical decisions on matters affecting the welfare of their community. Marjorie watched it at work, with impressive success, when she lived for a time among the Naga villagers of north-east India. When an important public question arose the elders assembled the people under a tree and put the matter before them. One after another they voiced their thoughts — men, women, sometimes young striplings — and were heard with attentive courtesy. When all had been said and the question thoroughly thrashed out, an elder summed up what had emerged as the common wish, and general agreement followed. There was no vote, no "winners" or "losers", no frustrated defeated minority. There was

also no hurry; the time needed was willingly given. A Naga leader who had been Marjorie's student in Sevagram more than ten years earlier commented to her on this Naga village *swaraj*. "Now you see what I meant," he said, "when I wrote in my evaluation of my Sevagram experience that Gandhi's ideals of democracy are to be found in operation in my own country."

Gandhi, we think, would have recognised a number of "fellow travellers" among those in many countries who have been working for what is commonly called "decentralisation", whose aim is to restore to the human person and the face-to-face human community that right to manage their own lives which has been usurped by the top heavy bureaucracies of our giant "democratic" states. One of these was Aldous Huxley, one of Gandhi's near-contemporaries in Britain. Another was a very different thinker, G.K. Chesterton, who rejected all centralised power in the name of the doctrine of the common good. "In human terms," he wrote, "this is a society of friendship, which means justice. In it self and society are integrated, for each has *sufficient* — sufficient to exercise freedom and to live democratically."[8] Another was Peter Maurin, the French pioneer who inspired the Catholic Workers Movement in USA, with its three-fold basis of non-violence, small-scale farming communes, and personal caring for the down-and-out and destitute. "Decentralisation", with its overtones of demolition, is too negative a word for such enterprises, which like Gandhi's "constructive programme" seek to build the new order — political, social, economic brick by brick from below. Kees Boeke too proposed to begin "from the bottom upwards, with us ordinary people talking over our common interests in the place where we live". Such groups, he said, have to learn through their own mistakes the difficult art of agreement; only then will they be ready for the next step, the "expanding circles" of Gandhi's dream. Gandhi believed equally strongly in the capacity of ordinary people to learn from that "best teacher" of democracy, the freedom to make mistakes and to put them right.

A third element in Gandhi's "perfect democracy" is that it relies on peaceful persuasion, not on force. "The spirit of democracy has to come from within," he wrote. "It cannot be evolved by forcible methods... Without the recognition of non-violence on a national scale there is no such thing as a democratic government."[9] The truth of this is being increasingly recognized. "A democracy which makes or effectively prepares for modern war," wrote Aldous Huxley, "must *necessarily* cease to be democratic." The logic of the situation compels it to regiment its people — for their own good, of course! But Gandhi, as we have seen, would have nothing to do with such "benevolent" dictatorship. "That state is the most non-violent where the people are governed the least", he declared.[10] A few weeks later he added, with that glint of mischief and yet with seriousness: "The pity is that no one trusts *me* with the reins of government. Otherwise I would show how to govern non-violently. If I maintain a police force it will be a body of reformers."[11] There is another challenge to "democrats" who assume, as most of us do, that the police are there not to guide but to compel. The glimpses of Gandhi which we have recorded in this book include a number of examples of his rejection of coercion, even for what seem to be good ends. His picture of real democracy is closely linked with his often-repeated condemnation of coercion: "Coercion is deliberate violence; coercion is inhuman."

This dream of a "perfect democracy" is something which many believe to be politically impossible (even if it were desirable, which they often doubt). Human nature being what it is, they say, you can't expect altruism and you can't get rid of compulsion. Gandhi himself pointed out that his "new order" involves more than skillful political planning on the principles outlined above, revolutionary as these are. It involves standards of personal conduct which are moral and religious in character; it is only possible if there is "a self-imposed law of moral restraint", for real freedom depends on self-discipline. "A born democrat," he wrote, "yields willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of soci-

ety... it is the essence of traditional (Indian) politics that *swaraj* depends on *atma-sanyama* (self-control). In other words, democracy depends on *dharma*, upon the recognition and acceptance of standards of social duty and righteousness which transcend individual self-interest and which, in a healthy society, must inform every sphere of life." Boeke made the same point: a democratic polity is only possible if "the spirit of neighbourliness and mutual trust is active and alive", so that each is ready to subordinate personal preferences to the welfare of the whole, in what he calls "the self-discipline of the group".

In Gandhi's view the distinguishing mark of *human* nature is precisely this power to transcend immediate self-interest for the sake of a greater good. *Human* nature carries within itself a seed of the divine. Gandhi's reply to the cynics is that when you see human nature as it really is you *can* expect altruism, you *can* appeal to reason.

The Indian tradition of *dharma* is one expression of this truth about human nature; it is a way of life fashioned from the age-old experience of the face-to-face village community. Rabindranath Tagore described it in imaginative prose in an essay, *City and Village*, published in 1928, which made a profound impression on Marjorie during her first years in India. "Villages," he wrote, "have grown on the threshold of the earth's store of food. Lakshmi, the goddess of plenty, is beautiful as well as benign. And as the fruits of the earth are beautiful, so is the good fellowship of man. The immortal in man has found expression through his hospitable reunions: his morality, his literature, his music, his art, the variety of his ceremonials. Through these he becomes conscious of his own depth... and the community becomes a common shelter where relationships are extended unbroken from self to others, from present to future, and *work for all takes the place of work for self*." The American thinker Lewis Mumford, in his study of *The City in History*, makes essentially the same point: "The order and stability of

the village, its oneness with the forces of nature... have as a first obligation the cherishing and nurturing of life. What we call morality began in the *mores*, the life-conserving customs, of the village."

It was Gandhi's recognition of this living force of *dharma* which inspired his belief in the common people, and in their power to discriminate between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, in the circumstances of their own lives. It was the shared faith in *dharma* which brought him so close to Indian village people everywhere. It was this that made possible, under his leadership, a spiritual, disciplined and moral course of *mass* action, whether among the indentured Tamil labourers in South Africa, the peasants of Champaran in Bihar, or on many later occasions. "They need no sermons on non-violence," he wrote. "If we know how to strike the right chord we can bring out the music."

The question must be asked, however: what is to be done when things and people go wrong? — for they certainly do, as Gandhi the realist very well knew. The problem is related to a matter we have already touched on: the need to find a balance, in any human community, between individual initiative and mutual responsibility. In his essay *City and Village*, Tagore discussed this question in the context of the growth and function of the city, which he saw as a focus of the shared human interests of a circle of villages. "Towns," he wrote, "are organised centres for serving special needs of the body politic. There, the pressure of the community is relaxed, and the fire of individual ambition leads to ever-fresh creation." This creativity, this release of individual energy and adventurous pioneering, may bring about a great enrichment of human life. "In their natural state," Tagore continued, "village and town have harmonious interactions. The village is the natural habitation, and from it flow food and health and fellow-feeling. The city represents specialisation, and from it return gifts of wealth, knowledge and energy to serve and enrich the village. Cities are healthy only so long

as they continue to be centres of integration and distribute the gifts they receive."

Kishore Saint, a modern Indian thinker, suggests in his stimulating essay *A Gandhian Frame of Action*[12] that things go wrong when "men and women endowed with the power to excel" cease to use their gifts for the enrichment of the community but cut loose from the community and use their power for themselves. "When this power is devoid of *dharma*," he writes, "it gives birth to an elite which is demonic and anti-human." The greed of self-centred power destroys community and degrades both the human and the natural resources on which society depends. Lust for gain demands a larger and larger scale of operations, a more and more centralised "efficiency". The *natural* city, like the villages it serves, is "a visible, maternal, cherishing community". But in the greed-swollen city, in Lewis Mumford's words, "these primary bonds of fellow-feeling are dissolved and the 'we' becomes a buzzing swarm of 'I's"[12], every man for himself. The city no longer serves and enriches its villages, it enslaves them and sucks them dry. Without the spirit of *dharma* to maintain the delicate creative balance between individual enterprise and mutual responsibility, the very basis of human community is destroyed.

But the great concept of *dharma* had for Gandhi, as for many thinkers before him, a more than human significance. It was a law of cosmic dimensions; it was the "Duty" to whom Wordsworth addressed his great Ode:

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.

Reverence for this cosmic life, this cosmic law, entailed for Gandhi a scrupulous self-restraint in all use of nature's gifts. "The true yardstick of civilisation," he wrote, "is not the multiplication of wants but the voluntary curtailment of wants." Tagore spoke out of the same great tradition when he declared that "if

civilisation is ready to sell its soul for what the West calls progress, then I choose to remain primitive in material possessions, hoping to achieve civilisation in the realm of the spirit... The great problem is not one of poverty, but of unhappiness. Man forgets that the divinity within him is revealed by the halo of his happiness. Happiness is final, it is creative, the source of its riches is within itself."[13]

This halo of happiness has been the mark of many simple civilisations which our greedy and arrogant age scornfully labels "primitive". They have recognised and obeyed a cosmic law of *dharma* in their respect for the whole order of nature of which our human life is a part. There is no need here to re-tell the horror-story of the reckless destruction for immediate profit of the very bases of life, of which the mania for nuclear power is only the most sensational example. Only too often time has shown, after happy human communities have been uprooted and scattered, and their life-supporting natural resources degraded and destroyed, that "primitive" local insight was wiser than the arrogant cleverness of the "expert", even measured by the yardstick of short-term material profit. The well-being, perhaps the continued existence, of the human race may depend on the ability of generations now living to learn to assess every proposed action, as the Iroquois Indians are said to have done, by its effect on the welfare of seven succeeding generations.

As far back as the 1920s, Gandhi and his friend J.C. Kumarappa were challenging the "violence" of human attitudes to nature. They had few "fellow-travellers" then, but there are many today to be found in the various branches of the new ecology movement. Of special interest in the light of Gandhi's thought is the "bio-regional" vision which defines the natural limits of human communities in terms of the whole eco-system of particular bio-regions. It often seems in India that the traditional local market-town is the focus of a recognisable little bio-system, while the old district boundaries

may delimit coherent and distinctive bio-regions, so that one is conscious of a subtle change in the scenery as the bus passes from one district to another.

Gandhi's legacy to our generation therefore includes the "fight" to restore and preserve the sanctity of this living, mysterious world. He was a radical revolutionary, yes, and also a conservative revolutionary. That is not a contradiction in terms, for the conservation of all that is most precious to humanity depends on a radical revolution in the commonly-accepted standards of human conduct. Is such a revolution possible? Kishore Saint asks the question in the essay we have quoted: "Can the innate moral and spiritual sense of mankind overcome the destructive forces unleashed by the demonic elite?" Can it overcome the violence of human greed? Many today would answer — No. They have lost hope; the demonic element in the human heart seems to them to be too strong. But to lose hope is to lose everything. To persist in hope, as Gandhi's American "fellow-traveller" Jim Wallis has written, is to undermine the illusions upon which the destructive, anti-human forces depend. "To say No to the present madness is a good thing, but it is not enough. To walk a new path, with a positive vision of where we are going, is a better thing. It is to say Yes to hope, it can spark a new movement of hope."[14]

Gandhi, as we said in the Introduction, offers hope. His answer to Kishore Saint's question would have been a resounding Yes: yes, we *can* overcome. We can *hope* to overcome, because "the innate moral and spiritual sense of mankind" is the most fundamental thing in human nature. "Non-violence," Gandhi wrote, "is not a cloistered virtue. It is no impossible ideal. It is capable of being practised by the millions because it is the law of our species... It is an active force of the highest order. It is the soul-force, or the power of the Godhead. within every human being. It is man's prerogative and birthright."[15]

Gandhi would remind us over and over again that "in the midst of darkness, light persists". In the midst of the demonic darkness which accompanied the partition of India he suffered greatly in spirit, as he saw the things he gave his life for broken. Yet he called together his "constructive workers" and spoke to them of hope: "Nurture the light, strengthen the spirit of compassion... Compassion is the root of *dharma*, and its fruit is a spiritual authority strong enough to prevail over temporal power."

Gandhi's power over others is in this spiritual authority, the only kind of power that does not corrupt. Some Chinese scholars called on him in Delhi during that dark September of 1947. They quoted Lao Tzu:

> Production without possession
> Action without self-assertion
> Leadership without domination.

Gandhi was delighted. He would, we think, have been equally delighted to hear Asian women in 1984 wrestling with the same problem: "Social power is a reality... but it is not to be grasped as power *over* others, it is to be shared in community, in shared decision and shared service."[16] Such corporate power does not corrupt; it makes possible Lao Tzu's "leadership without domination".

Gandhi's own spiritual authority was exercised in his daily intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men and women. He would seek patiently and hopefully to nurture the light in each, to strengthen their own hope, their own compassion, their own vision of Truth. "The basic principle of his *satyagraha*," wrote his friend Dr. Zakir Husain, "was that truth and justice can be established only by continuously intensifying moral awareness. The free moral agent, anxious to awaken this sensitiveness in others, has to eradicate within himself the desire to use force or authority for the attainment of his ends. Gandhi challenged us to exercise our own freedom as moral beings, obeying the moral law as a demand of

our own nature."[17] Man cannot make peace with man until he has made peace within himself, peace between himself and his environment. "Generally speaking," said Gandhi once, "the work of peace can only be done by local men in their own localities." It can only be done by personal presence and visible example.[18]

For Gandhi, the working out of the cosmic law of non-violence was "a passion of the soul". "Every experiment of mine," he declared, "has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind... The more I work at this law, the more I feel delight in life, delight in the scheme of this universe. It gives a meaning to the mysteries of nature, it gives me a peace that I have no power to describe."[19]

Yet it was a part of his greatness that he remained completely open, completely humble, about the foundation on which his whole life-work was built. "I cannot *prove*," he wrote, "that love is the source and end of life. If it is not, if love (or non-violence) is not the law of our being, the whole of my argument falls to pieces. The only 'proof' is in the experience of living."[20]

The experience of living, for him, was an experience of being guided and sustained by "a higher unseen Power". His *satyagraha*, the expression of his faith in non-violence, "presupposes," he said, "the guidance of God". Gandhi, who so often urged us to be guided by reason rather than emotion, also knew a guidance which was beyond reason. This something beyond, this unseen Power, he experienced as an Inner Voice, "more real to him than his own existence". "I believe and I *know*," he once said, "that this is something beyond the intellect. I cannot offer any further explanation. I simply do not know. I do know that it has never failed me."[21]

This sounds absurd, and many of Gandhi's rationalist contemporaries found it so. But as Camus once said, "*vivre*, c'est faire *vivre l 'absurde*" — to live is to bring to life the absurd. Gandhi

knew that it was neither possible nor desirable to treat the human being as a totally rational creature, and he believed that the "absurd", irrational Inner Voice is a reality accessible to every individual who is prepared to listen and obey. People today who find little or no meaning in the idea of God may nevertheless be led by "the experience of living" to recognise a compelling Voice from somewhere beyond reason.

One such "modern" sought out Gandhi in July 1939. Dr. Fabri was a Hungarian philosopher who had no belief in a personal God, nor in the efficacy of prayer. He thought of prayer as "begging", but he knew that it was a central part of Gandhi's life and asked him about his experience of it. Gandhi responded generously, as he did to all sincere enquirers. "It is very difficult, but I must try to answer your question," he said. "I seek power to do my work... You may say that I do beg — I beg this of the Divinity within, that real self with which I have not yet achieved complete identification. You may also say that I pray to an outside Power. I am a part of that Infinite, but such an infinitesimal part that I feel outside it. I feel some outside Power has to help me."

"Tolstoy says the same thing," commented Dr. Fabri. "One does sometimes lapse into begging like a child from its father."

"Pardon me," said Gandhi, "but I would not call it a lapse. I do pray to God, and when I do so the inconceivable distance between him and me is obliterated... I lose myself in an invisible Power. It is far truer to say that God did something for me than that I did it. I prefer to use the language of my ancestors or of children. I am no better than a child."[22]

The authors find this record very moving, because it reveals so much of the Gandhi we knew and loved. It shows him trying to share that experience to which so many throughout history have borne witness, of a Beyond which is also within, of an inconceiv-

able Other who is also "nearer than breathing". Above all it shows him ready to be a child among children, in this as in so many other ways. When in the last moments of earthly consciousness Gandhi's spirit turned to prayer, it was the language of his childhood and his ancestors that sprang to his lips: "*Hé Rama*!" — Rama, the old beloved human name of the Lord.

Professor K. Swaminathan has recorded a comment that Ramana Maharshi once made in his hearing during Gandhi's lifetime: "They say that Hanuman is *chiranjeevi* (immortal). It does not mean that a certain monkey goes on living for ever and ever. It means that there will always be on earth someone who serves Rama as your Gandhi does now."[23] Gandhi was a knight-errant, as we said earlier, in the service of the Lord whom he knew as Rama. In that service he died, but he was never defeated, for as he himself wrote, "A *satyagrahi* — one who holds on to Truth — is vanquished only when he forsakes Truth and non-violence and turns a deaf ear to the Inner Voice." He refused to be vanquished, even by death. "So long as my faith burns bright," he declared, "as I hope it will even if I stand alone, I shall be alive in the grave, and what is more, speaking from it." The words were published in the first issue of *Harijan* to appear after Independence Day.[24] Six months later, soon after Gandhi's death, *Harijan* published a short comment which Jehangir had felt impelled to write: "Let each one ask himself if Bapu is alive or not. Let those who are not sure of the answer watch those who know the answer."[25] They knew the answer, he said. because "there is work to be done", and Gandhi's living voice was calling them to do it. We think that he is still speaking, and if like Dr. Fabri we find "God-language" difficult, and cannot think of our task as "the service of Rama", Gandhi will laughingly suggest to us, as he did to him, that the English language is so elastic that one can always find another word for the same Reality!

Envoi

"People try to 'get away from it all', but that is not where you were meant to be. You were meant to be in the front line of the great battle, wherever you can most effectively work, and that is often where the work is hardest."

Kathleen Rainer in the *Alumni Magazine*, University of Cambridge, 1992.

References & Sources

Introduction

1 The late Amiya C. Chakravarty in *The Viswabharati Quarterly*, October 1969.
2 *Everyday Religion* by Edward S. Woods, published about 1921.

Chapter I

1 Letter dated 12.4.1919.
2 Original *He Mor Chitta*, in *Gitanjali* (Bengali) 1910: translation by Indira Debi Choudhurani, abridged.
3 Suhrit Kumar Mukhopadhyaya. Original Bengali; English translation in *The Vishwabharati Quarterly*, Gandhi Centenary number, October 1969.
4 Report to the Government of India, March 1921, quoted in Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power, 1921-22.*
5 Quotations from Gandhi, *Young India*, 5.11.1925, and *To the Gandhi Seva Sangh*, 21.2.1946. Quotations from Tagore, *A Striving for Swaraj*, 1925.
6 See Chaturvedi and Sykes, *Charles Freer Andrews*, p. 262.
7 *Three Plays*, Oxford University Press, Bombay 1950.
8 *Manusmriti*, sloka 174.

Chapter II

1 *The Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place.*
2 The words are quoted from Chagla's tribute to Gandhi, 40 years later, contributed to *Mahatma Gandhi: 100 Years*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan, 1969.
3 *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin.*
4 *Young India*, 1.6.1921.
5 *All Men are Brothers*, p. 152-55.

Chapter III

1 *Young India*, 20.11.1921.
2 *Wings of Death*: *Last Poems of Rabindranath Tagore*, translated by Aurobindo Bose, London 1960.
3 Story told by Verrier Elwin in an essay contributed to Kanu Gandhi's *Gandhi Album*, London 1931.

4 *Charles Freer Andrews* by Chaturvedi and Sykes, London 1949.
5 *All Men are Brothers*, pp. 153-154.
6 *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, p. 53.
7 *City and Village*, 1928.
8 K.R. Kripalani, *Gandhi and Tagore*, Hind Kitabs 1945.
9 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 48, pp. 50-51.
10 *Bidhir Bandhan karbe tumi eman saktiman*: abridged free translation.
11 *Kheya* 1906.
12 Essay in *Mahatma Gandhi: A Hundred Years* ed. S. Radhakrishnan.

Chapter IV

1 *Harijan*, 24.7.39.
2 Quoted by Pyarelal: *A Pilgrimage for Peace*, p. 36.
3 See *Young India*, 7.5.1931.
4 *Harijan*, 1.9.1940.
5 The Aga Khan's *Memoirs*, quoted by A.Tripathi in the *Extremist Challenge* (1967), p. 16.
6 See Dom Moraes, *Witness to an Era*.
7 Reproduced in *An Anthology of Indian Eloquence*, ed. R.K. Prabhu, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
8 See *Young India*, 16.3.1924 and 8.9.1920.
9 *Vigil*, Cuttack, March 1985, attributed to Carl Scherz.
10 *Letters to a Friend*, 2.3.1921.
11 CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 232.
12 *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, 1940 edn., p. 107 .
13 Speech in June 1940, quoted in *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 361, by D.G. Tendulkar.
14 *Harijan*, 11.2.1939 and elsewhere.
15 *Harijan*, 11.8. 1940.
16 This was the late Amiya C.Chakravarty, who reports the conversation in the Gandhi Centenary Number of the *Visvabharati Quarterly*, October 1969.

Chapter V

1 Letter dated 5.5.1942. See *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, Mirabehn's autobiography.
2 *Report in Bombay Chronicle*, July 1942.
3 Maidan: an open common or public space. *Kranti*: revolution.

Chapter VI

1 *Prohibition at any cost*, a selection of Gandhi's statements on drink published by Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad.
2 *Young India*, 14.8.1924
3 See *Memories of Gandhiji* by Shanti Kumar Morarji (Gujarati), Ahmedabad 1963.

Chapter VII

1 *Harijan*, 9.11.1935.
2 *Harijan*, 29.3.1935.
3 Gandhi's answer to someone who asked why he had got involved in nature cure in the evening of his life. (Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 97).
4 *Harijan*, 17.3.1946.
5 *Harijan*, 28.7.1946.
6 *Harijan*, 8.5.1937.
7 *Harijan*, 8.6.1940. Emphasis ours.
8 Quoted in *Sansthakul*, June 1985. (Original source needed).
9 Speech at the opening of a *Nai Talim* training camp, 19.11.1944.
10 *Young India*, 29.1. 1925.
11 *Harijan*, 28.4.1946.

Chapter VIII

1 The story is to be found in the Bible, in the *Book of Daniel* in the "Old Testament".
2 See *Harijan*, 29.3. 1933.
3 *Young India*, 6 October 1921.
4 Statement by Nirmal Anand, New Delhi.
5 *Young India*, 12.6.1920.
6 *Harijan*, 25.7.1936.

Chapter IX

1 Reproduced in *An Anthology of Modern Indian Eloquence*, ed. R.K. Prabhu, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960.
2 *Harijan*, 8.6.1940.
3 *Harijan*, 19.2.1946.
4 *Young India*, 7.5.1931..
5 Speech in Bombay, 24.3.1946.
6 *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, 2.8.1934
7 *Harijan*, 1.2.1937.
8 *Harijan*, 14.7.1946

Chapter X

1 *Harijan*, 11.3.1939.
2 *Harijan*, 24.8.1934.
3 The quotations which follow are taken from *A Saint at Work* by Amiya C. Chakravarty, Philadelphia 1950.

Chapter XI

1 *Harijan*: speech on 20.7.1947.
2 Quoted from Harijan by Louis Fischer, *Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 588 (Granada edition 1982).

3 *Harijan*, 12.10.1947.
4 *Plain Tales from the Raj*, pp. 242-43.
5 *Harijan*, 30.8.1947, 7.9.1947.
6 *Harijan*, 9.6.1946
7 *Harijan*, 4.1.1948

Chapter XII

1 The two press statements, January 12 and 16, are to be found in an Appendix to Mahatma Gandhi's *Collected Works*, Vol. 90.
2 Pyarelal, *A Nation-Builder at Work*, p. 44.
3 George Catlin, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi*.

Epilogue

1 *Young India*, 12.6.1924.
2 *Harijan*, 10.8.1947.
3 *The Call of Truth*, 1921.
4 S. Satyamurthy, quoted in *Harijan*, 27.7.1947.
5 *Nonviolence in Peace and War*, Volume 1, p. 349.
6 *Harijan*, 13.5.1940.
7 Kees Boeke, *Sociocracy: Democracy As It Might Be*, first published in May 1945.
8 G.K. Chesterton: *The Outline of Sanity*.
9 *Harijan*, 11.2.1939.
10 *Harijan*, 21.7.1940.
11 *Harijan*, 25.8.1940.
12 Published in *Hind Swaraj: a Fresh Look*, edited by Nagashwar Prasad, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi, 1985.
13 Rabindranath Tagore, *City and Village*, 1928.
14 Jim Wallis in *Sojourners* magazine, April 1984.
15 *Young India*, 2.7.1925; *To Gandhi Seva Sangh*, 25.10.1939; *Sansthakul*, June 1985.
16 *Is Power a Dirty Word*? Article in Asian women's magazine, "*In God's Image*", Singapore, December 1984.
17 From *Maharma Gandhi: 100 Years*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan.
18 Quoted by Herbert Read, *Ibid*.
19 *Young India*, 1.10.1931.
20 *Harijan*, 26.9.1936.
21 See *Harijan*, 8.7.1933 and *Diary of Mahadev Desai*, p. 127.
22 Report in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Volume 5, much abridged.
23 K. Swaminathan: *Santhanam Memorial Lecture*, Madras, 23.8.1984.
24 *Harijan*, 17.8.1947.
25 *Harijan*, 14.2.1948.

Marjorie Sykes
1905–1995

High in the Nilgiri Hills of South India, nestled into the side of a steep hill, there is a small cottage, charming in its simplicity and beauty. It holds fond memories for many of us. In this cottage, Marjorie Sykes had family-sized training groups in non-violence, and received visitors from all over the world. Many were young people who had heard by some grapevine that there with Marjorie they would find the simplicity and emphasis on essentials for which they had been searching. When Marjorie built her home there in Kotagiri, she had been in India for over 30 years.

Marjorie was born and brought up in a coal mining area in South Yorkshire. Her father, head-master of the school there, was an early influence on Marjorie's own teaching philosophy. After graduating from Cambridge with first-class Honours in English, she went to India in 1928 to teach at the Bentinck School for Girls in Madras where she very soon became Principal. It was during these years that she found that the Quaker faith "spoke to her condition", and on her next visit to England she joined the Religious Society of Friends.

In 1939 Marjorie was invited by Rabindranath Tagore to be Representative of English Culture at Santiniketan where she worked closely with him during the last years of his life. There she became

friends with Charles Freer Andrews; after his death she held the C.F. Andrews Memorial Chair in 1944-46 while working on his biography.

She knew Gandhi well and was active in the non-violent movement for Indian independence. During these years, Marjorie taught English at the Women's Christian College in Madras where she chose to live in the slum area, starting a nursery school for the children of working mothers which has continued to this day. After independence, Marjorie went to Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram as Principal of his Basic Education programme.

Marjorie continued her work for peace as a consultant to the non-violent civil rights movement in the USA and Canada in 1964, then as a member of the peacekeeping team which monitored the ceasefire between the Indian government and the Nagaland Independence fighters.

She became increasingly active among Quakers in India and elsewhere — often at Rasulia in mid-India. In 1974-75 she served as 'Friend-from-the-Orient' at the invitation of Pacific and North Pacific Yearly Meetings in the USA, travelling around the Pacific Rim and bringing inspiration through her talks and personal sharing. Marjorie possessed a great deal of what Evelyn Underhill called the "power of being outwardly genial and inwardly austere". Charming, full of fun, accepting, a delightful companion, Marjorie nevertheless, quietly and unobtrusively lived what she believed in — a life of simplicity and self-discipline.

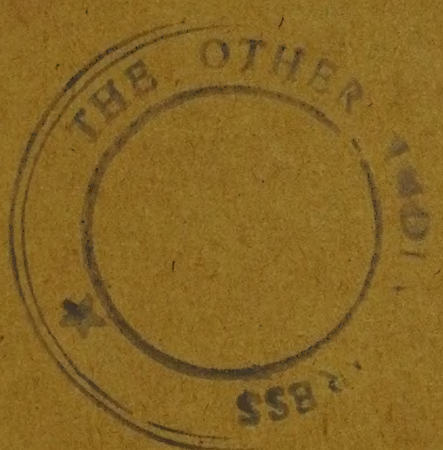
There followed periods as Friend-in-Residence at Quaker Study Centres — Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania and Woodbrooke in England. Throughout her life she found time for writing — books, articles, translations (she was fluent in Tamil, Bengali and Hindi), editing the *Friendly Way* and, to the joy of her friends, personal letters.

Marjorie had a distinguished career but she will be remembered most of all for her gift of friendship, the way she lived her life and the transforming power of her spirit.

Martha Dart
from *The Friend*,
15 September, 1995

TITLES FROM THE OTHER INDIA PRESS

Heads and Tails
Maneka Gandhi pp 182 Rs.75
The Second Heads and Tails
Maneka Gandhi pp 187 Rs.75
Everything You Wanted To Know About Sprouts
By J Vaish pp 68 Rs.25
Papa Moose's Nursery Rhymes For Our Times
Cecil Rajendra pp 78 Rs.38
Fish, Curry and Rice: A Citizens' Report on the Goan Environment
Edited by Claude Alvares pp 260 Rs.200
The Other Face of Cancer
Manu Kothari and Lopa Mehta pp 152 Rs.85
Harvest of Devastation
E.G. Vallianatos pp 123 Rs.75
Night of Destiny
Davison Budhoo pp 720 Rs.195
The Blinded Eye: 500 Years of Christopher Columbus
Ziauddin Sardar, Ashis Nandy, Merryl Davies, Claude Alvares pp 96 Rs.45
The Dispute Over Swami Vivekananda's Legacy
Rajni Bakshi pp 32 Rs.15
Bhopal: The Inside Story
T.R. Chouhan & Others pp 212 Rs.90
The People Versus Global Capital
The Permanent People's Tribunal pp 163 Rs.75
Broken Buds
Cecil Rajendra pp 70 Rs.30
Living, Dying
Manu Kothari and Lopa Mehta pp 139 Rs.75
The Violence of the Green Revolution
Vandana Shiva pp 265 Rs.95
An Agricultural Testament
By Albert Howard pp 266 Rs.120
Sugar: The Curse of Civilization
J J Rodale pp 66 Rs.25
Danger School
By IDAC pp 100 Rs.60
The Miracle Called Compost
by Vasanthrao Bombatkar pp 49
Justice for Women
Edited by Indira Jaising pp 363 Rs.150


THE OTHER

Gandhi

His Gift of the Fight

by Jehangir P. Patel & Marjorie Sykes

This book describes the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's personality on two people from very different backgrounds. Jehangir Patel is a Mumbai businessman who for many years has directed an old family concern, the Patel Cotton Co. Marjorie Sykes was a teacher, originally from England, who had spent her whole working life in India, and had become an Indian citizen.

"Their testimony is of unique interest and importance", writes Hallam Tennyson in his Preface, "The portrait that emerges is fresh, incisive, detailed...".

The authors' personal contacts with Gandhi were chiefly during the last ten years of his life, but sufficient historical background is given to enable readers to follow the narrative without difficulty.

It was the poet Rabindranath Tagore who described Gandhi's legacy to India and the world as the "gift of the fight". This book provides a personal account of the friendship between these two great men; it also shows how much the fight for a more fully human way of life owes to Gandhi's own insight and his pioneering practice.

Price: Rs DIB= 125

The Other India Press